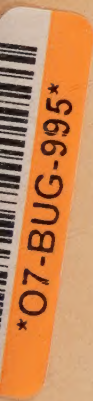


THE
STORY OF OLD
FORT DEARBORN

J. SEYMOUR CURREY



25-

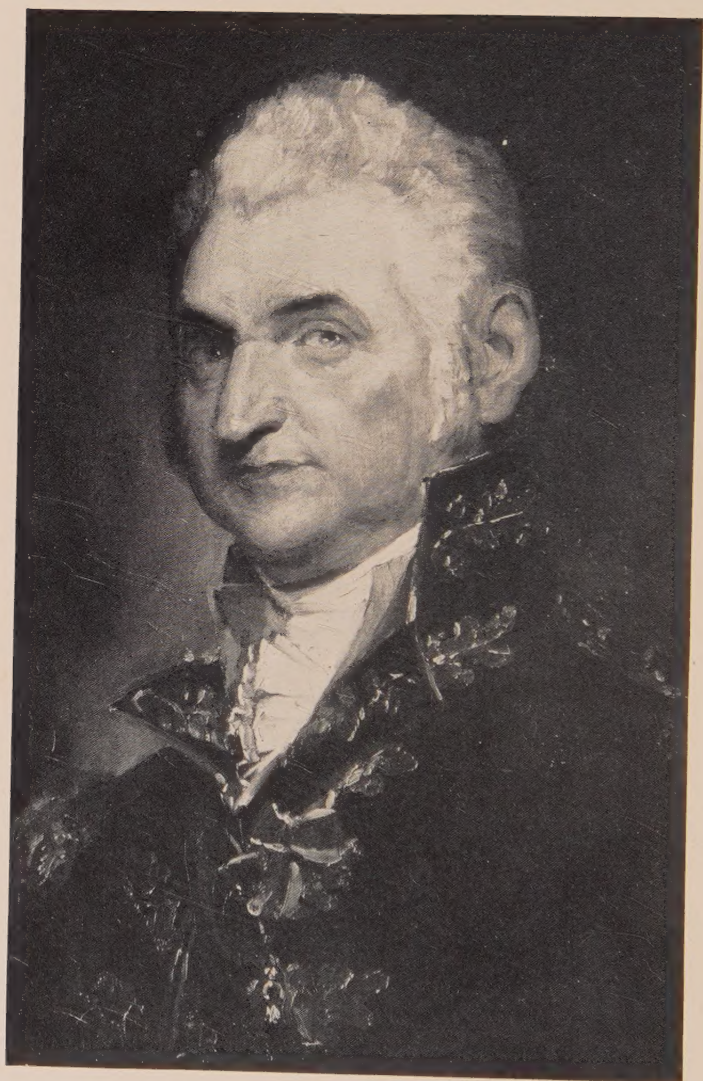
100

The Story of Old Fort Dearborn



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024

https://archive.org/details/bwb_O7-BUG-995



THE STORY OF OLD FORT DEARBORN

BY
J. SEYMOUR CURREY

WITH ELEVEN ILLUSTRATIONS



CHICAGO
A. C. McCLURG & CO.

1912

Copyright
A. C. McCLURG & CO.

1912

Published August, 1912

This Volume is Dedicated to
NELLY KINZIE GORDON

PREFACE

THERE were two Fort Dearborns, the first one having been built in 1803. This was occupied by a garrison of United States troops until 1812, when it was destroyed by the Indians immediately after the bloody massacre of that year. The second Fort Dearborn was built on the site of the former one in 1816, and continued in use as a military post, though at several intervals during periods of peaceful relations with the surrounding tribes the garrisons were withdrawn for a time. In 1836 the fort was finally evacuated by the military forces. The events narrated in the succeeding pages of this volume concern the first or Old Fort Dearborn.

The name "Chicago," as descriptive of the river and its neighborhood, was in use for more than a century before the first Fort Dearborn was built; it appears on Franque-lin's map printed in 1684 as "Chekagou,"

PREFACE

and is mentioned in various forms of spelling in the written and printed records of that and succeeding periods. It has been said that Chicago is the oldest Indian town in the West of which the original name is retained; thus its name enjoys a much greater antiquity than that of Fort Dearborn, familiar as the latter name is in our local annals.

In the course of its history Chicago has existed under three flags; first, under the domination of the French kings, from the period of its discovery to the year 1763, when, after the French and Indian War, it passed into the possession of the English. As British territory it remained until the close of the Revolutionary War, when the Western Territories were ceded by the English to the Americans at the treaty of peace concluded in 1783; and thus the region in which Chicago is situated finally came under the Stars and Stripes.

CONTENTS

Preface

	PAGE
I Wilderness Days	3
II Fortifying the Frontier	17
III The Tragedy	95

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
GENERAL HENRY DEARBORN	<i>Frontispiece</i>
CHICAGO FROM 1803 TO 1812	3
THE WILD ONION PLANT	12
BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF OLD FORT DEARBORN	27
RESIDENCE OF JOHN KINZIE	32
MR. AND MRS. JOHN H. KINZIE	47
REBEKAH WELLS HEALD	58
CAPTAIN WILLIAM WELLS	58
HARDSCRABBLE	74
FACSIMILE OF LETTER OF GENERAL HULL TO CAPTAIN HEALD	103
MEMORIAL MONUMENT TO THE MASSACRE	136
FRANQUELIN'S MAP OF 1684	165
MAP OF CHICAGO IN 1812	165

I

Wilderness Days



THE STORY OF OLD FORT DEARBORN

I

WILDERNESS DAYS

AT the time that Fort Dearborn was built the site of Chicago had been known to the civilized world for a hundred and thirty years. The Chicago River and the surrounding region had been discovered by two explorers, Joliet and Marquette, who with a party of five men in two canoes were returning from a voyage on the Mississippi, which they were the first white men to navigate.

Joliet was the leader of the party, and he was accompanied, as was the custom in French expeditions into unknown countries, by a missionary, who in this case was James Marquette, a Jesuit priest. Both were young men, Joliet twenty-eight years of age and Marquette thirty-six. The expedition had

THE STORY OF

been authorized by the French Government, the purpose being to penetrate the western wilderness in an endeavor to reach the "Great River," of which so much had been heard from wandering tribes of Indians, and to find the direction of its flow. Many conjectures were made by the men of that time as to the course of this river and where it reached the sea, some believing that it emptied into the "Sea of Virginia," others that it flowed into the Gulf of Mexico, and still others that it discharged its waters into the "Vermilion Sea," that is, the Gulf of California; and if the latter conjecture should prove to be correct a passage might thus be opened to China and India.

In the event of such a discovery being made, great honor would naturally accrue to its projectors. The instructions to undertake such an expedition came from Colbert, the minister of Louis XIV, who wrote in 1672 to Talon, the Intendant at Quebec, that an effort should be made "to reach the sea"; that is, to discover and explore the "Great River" and solve the mystery of its outlet.

OLD FORT DEARBORN

Father Dablon, in the *Jesuit Relations*, thus wrote of the enterprise about to be undertaken: "The Count Frontenac, our Governor, and Monsieur Talon, then our Intendant, recognizing the importance of this discovery, . . . appointed for this undertaking Sieur Joliet, whom they considered very fit for so great an enterprise; and they were well pleased that Father Marquette should be of the party."

The expedition was accordingly organized, and started from the Mission of St. Ignace on the 17th of May, 1673. In due course the party reached the mouth of the Fox River (of Wisconsin), at the head of Green Bay. From this point the party passed up the Fox and soon after crossed the portage into the Wisconsin River. They were now far beyond the farthest point reached by any previous explorers. On the 17th of June the explorers paddled their canoes out on to the broad bosom of the Mississippi. Marquette wrote in his journal that when he beheld the great river it was "with a joy that I cannot express."

It was while carrying out the purposes of

THE STORY OF

this expedition that the explorers passed through the Chicago River from the west. They had reached the Mississippi as they had planned to do, had floated down its current as far as the mouth of the Arkansas, and on the way back had ascended the Illinois and Des-plaines rivers, made a portage into the Chicago River, and, passing out on Lake Michigan, pursued their journey to the point on Green Bay at the mouth of the Fox River from which they had started at the beginning of June, after an absence on the journey of almost four months.

It should not be forgotten that De Soto, a Spanish explorer, had discovered the Mississippi at a point not far from the present city of Memphis, in the year 1541, a hundred and thirty-two years before the voyage of Joliet and Marquette; but the knowledge of that discovery had faded from men's minds. They actually passed over the spot where De Soto had crossed the river in the previous century, though apparently they were not aware of that fact, for no mention is made in Marquette's journal of De Soto or his discovery.

OLD FORT DEARBORN

The chief significance of the Chicago portage to the explorers when they passed it was the view of the lake which they had as they descended the stream towards its mouth. Lake Michigan, indeed, had been discovered long before, but it was known only along its northern shores extending as far as Green Bay, which had been entered by the missionaries, a station being established at its farthest extremity. The southern extension of Lake Michigan was unknown until Joliet and Marquette paddled into it with their canoes as they left the Chicago River.

No date was mentioned by Marquette in his journal of the arrival of the party in the river, but it must have been about the beginning of September, 1673. Joliet also kept a journal, but unfortunately he lost all his papers in a canoe accident before he reached Quebec on his return. That the site of the future Chicago, situated as it was on so important a portage connecting the lake with the river systems of the interior, possessed advantages of a striking kind was plainly perceived by Joliet, who afterward wrote that

THE STORY OF

an artificial waterway could easily be constructed by cutting only a half league of prairie, "to pass from the Lake of the Illinois into St. Louis River."

Thus, upon reaching the mission station of St. Francis Xavier, situated near the mouth of the Fox River, from which they had started, the explorers had completed a journey of about twenty-five hundred miles in a period of four months, had opened to the eyes of the world the wonderful river of the West, had incidentally discovered the site of the future great city of Chicago, and had made the complete circuit back to Green Bay without the loss of a man or the occurrence of a single untoward accident.

La Salle's first appearance on Lake Michigan was in September, 1679, six years after Joliet's expedition. La Salle came down through the Straits of Mackinac with a party of seventeen, skirted the western shore of the lake toward the south, but believing he could reach the Illinois River by a more favorable route than that over which Joliet had passed, he coasted around the southern end of the lake

OLD FORT DEARBORN

until he reached the mouth of the St. Joseph River. Ascending that river he found the portage into the Kankakee and readily made his way to the Illinois, where he established a fort near Peoria. He returned to Canada the following year, and recruiting another party he once more passed over the St. Joseph-Kankakee route to the same destination as before.

Again returning to Canada he started near the end of the year 1681 with a much larger party, and this time he chose the Chicago-Desplaines route to the interior. He continued on down the Illinois to its mouth, thence down the Mississippi, passed the farthest point reached by Joliet, and at length arrived at its mouth and issued forth upon the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. This event took place on the 7th of April, 1682.

La Salle was thus the first white man to pass down the Mississippi River from the mouth of the Illinois to the Gulf. De Soto's followers after his death had indeed returned from their ill-starred expedition by way of the lower Mississippi, but it remained for

THE STORY OF

La Salle to arrive at a certain knowledge of the course taken by the river throughout the long distance over which he passed and to determine its flow into the Gulf of Mexico, and moreover to establish the first substantial claim in behalf of a European power to the soil of Louisiana.

La Salle had entered upon an extensive system of colonization, and through many dangers and difficulties he had secured footholds for the French in the western country. He passed frequently back and forth between the forts he had established and his base of supplies at Montreal. In the summer of 1683 he was in Chicago and wrote a letter to his lieutenant, Tonty, whom he had left in command of Fort St. Louis, on the Illinois River, dating the letter "Portage du Chicagou, 4 Juin, 1683." During the next three years he spent the larger part of his time in attempting to found a colony on the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, and while in the midst of his activities he was foully assassinated by some of his followers. His death occurred on March 19, 1687.

OLD FORT DEARBORN

Parkman sums up the character of La Salle in this fine passage: "Serious in all things, incapable of the lighter pleasures, incapable of repose, finding no joy but in pursuit of great designs, too shy for society and too reserved for popularity, often unsympathetic and always seeming so, smothering emotions he could not utter, schooled to universal distrust, stern to his followers and pitiless to himself, bearing the brunt of every hardship and every danger, demanding of others an equal constancy joined to an implicit deference, heeding no counsel but his own, attempting the impossible and grasping at what was too vast to hold,—he contained in his own complex and painful nature the chief springs of his triumphs, his failures, and his death."

The Chicago-Desplaines portage was used to a constantly increasing degree in the following years. Missionaries, traders, and military people found it a convenient point for residence or as a thoroughfare to the Illinois River. But on account of divided counsels among the French authorities at Quebec there were no adequate measures taken to protect

THE STORY OF

the whites from the encroachments and hostility of the savages, so that early in the next century the portage declined in importance and fell into disuse, other routes to the interior being preferred.

The name "Chicago," in some of the numerous forms of spelling employed, is met with on the maps of successively later dates, occasionally in the reports of French commandants at Detroit or Mackinac, and more frequently in the letters of the missionaries preserved in that extensive collection known as the *Jesuit Relations*. After the victory of Wolfe over Montcalm and the fall of Quebec, the French ceded in 1763 all their western possessions to the English, which "left France without a foothold on the American main."

But so far as the portage at Chicago was concerned this change of sovereignty made little difference. What with the constant strife among the savage tribes whose normal condition was that of warfare, and the dangers to the whites caused by the neglect of military protection, the region was left a solitude; and the few references to its existence



OLD FORT DEARBORN

during a hundred years indicate confused relations between the tribes and the few whites who ventured to visit the region. The sovereignty of the western country again changed in 1783, this time from the British to the American Government. A few cabins were built in the vicinity in later years, and when the American Government proceeded to the erection of a fort in 1803 these cabins constituted the only evidences of civilization that existed on the spot.

II

Fortifying the Frontier

II

FORTIFYING THE FRONTIER

IN the early summer of 1803, the schooner "Tracy," a transport vessel belonging to the United States Government, left Detroit with a cargo of building material and supplies, and in due time arrived off the mouth of the Chicago River. The purpose was to build a fort at this point. About the same time a company of sixty-six men and three commissioned officers took their departure from Detroit to take part in building the fort and to occupy it after its completion. Because of the diminutive size of the schooner the men composing this force did not sail in her, except the commanding officer, Captain John Whistler, accompanied by several members of his family. The soldiers marched overland, conducted by Lieutenant James S. Swearingen, and reached Chicago about the

THE STORY OF

same time that the vessel arrived. On its way, the vessel stopped at St. Joseph, Michigan, where Captain Whistler and his family disembarked; they continued their journey to Chicago in a rowboat. The family of Captain Whistler consisted of himself and his wife, their son, Lieutenant William Whistler, and his wife, recently married, and a younger son, George Washington Whistler, who was about two years old.

General Henry Dearborn was at that time Secretary of War in the cabinet of President Jefferson. His orders to the commanding officer at Detroit were to send a body of men to construct and garrison a fort at the mouth of the Chicago River. This locality had long been considered a suitable one for the construction of a frontier military post. A tract "six miles square, at the mouth of the Chikago River," had been ceded by the Indians to the United States at the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, evidently with a view to its favorable location as the site of a fort.

William Burnett, a trader at St. Joseph, writing to a firm in Montreal under date of

OLD FORT DEARBORN

August, 1798, said that it was understood that a garrison would be sent to Chicago in that year. This expectation, however, was not realized until five years later.

The Treaty of Greenville referred to was concluded by General Anthony Wayne with the tribes in 1795, after they had been disastrously defeated at the battle of Fallen Timbers in the previous year. A part of the description of the tract ceded was that it was "where a fort formerly stood." There was no trace of such a fort, however, when the builders of Fort Dearborn arrived upon the scene. The Miami Indian chief, Little Turtle, well known to the whites at that period and a man familiar with this region, said in later years when questioned about it that he remembered nothing of any fort that had ever stood on the spot before the building of Fort Dearborn.

There is evidence, however, that a fort, perhaps several of them at different periods, had been erected in this vicinity and occupied by the French; but having been built in a temporary fashion they utterly disappeared

THE STORY OF

after the French had ceased to occupy the country.

The tract "six miles square" mentioned in the Treaty of Greenville was never surveyed, and as the treaties of later years included the locality within other descriptions of ceded lands, it did not become necessary to make a survey. For that reason the exact boundaries of the six-mile-square tract were never determined and are not shown on official maps now recognized in title abstracts, though on some maps an outline of the tract is shown as an illustration, but without any authority as to the precise position occupied.

It has been stated that commissioners from Washington had selected as the site of a proposed fort on Lake Michigan a location at the mouth of the St. Joseph River where the city of St. Joseph now stands, but as the Indian tribes would not give their consent for its construction at that point, the commissioners had been obliged to decide on a site at the mouth of the Chicago River. In commenting on this statement a writer in the *Michigan Pioneer Collection of Historical Publications* says:

OLD FORT DEARBORN

"We conclude that had the fort been built at St. Joseph there would have been no Chicago." Mr. Edward G. Mason, a writer of acknowledged authority on subjects pertaining to western history, refers to this statement, and rather humorously observes: "This matter of a fort seems to have been peculiarly disastrous to the St. Joseph country. When it had one it constantly invited capture, and caused the inhabitants to spend more or less of their lives as prisoners of war, and when it did not have one it thereby lost the opportunity of becoming the commercial metropolis of the Northwest. I know of no such tract of land in all this section which has been so singularly unfortunate as the St. Joseph region."

Mr. Mason alludes in this passage to the vicissitudes suffered by the small military post or "tomahawk fortress," as such posts on the frontier were sometimes called, at the mouth of the St. Joseph River, which during the troublous period of the eighteenth century had frequently changed masters. At the time of which we are writing, the fort, or the remains of a fort, at that point was in such a condition

THE STORY OF

that a new structure would have been necessary if that site had been determined upon by the authorities.

Building operations for Fort Dearborn began on the Fourth of July, under the direction of Captain Whistler. The soldiers cut the timber required from the neighboring forests and, as there were no horses or oxen available in the vicinity, the men dragged the logs with ropes from the woods to the banks of the river, and floated them to the site chosen. At that period a forest of considerable density covered the land on the north side of the river, and there was also a fringe of trees along the South Branch throughout its entire length; but the extensive area in the South Division, excepting the woodland on the margin of the river, was open prairie. In fact, the Grand Prairie of Illinois, extending for hundreds of miles into the interior of the state, here reached the shore of the lake for a space of three or four miles along the water, and it is a singular fact that at no other place does the Grand Prairie border on Lake Michigan. It was on the line of this famous tract that the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

massacre occurred, which will be described in the following pages.

The portion of the Grand Prairie between the mouth of the river and a point some three or four miles south along the lake shore was mostly devoid of trees, a scanty growth of cottonwoods and pines, however, maintaining a precarious existence among the sand-dunes. A mile or two south of the river's mouth these low sand-hills became the predominant feature of the landscape, just as may be found at the present time along the low shores of the lake beyond the city limits toward the south and east. Behind the sand-hills the level prairie stretched away as far as the eye could reach. Schoolcraft, in one of his early voyages, related that as one approached the shores from the southern end of Lake Michigan, the appearance of these sand-dunes—between which was occasionally seen a scanty growth of stunted pines—gave a desolate aspect to the scene, in wonderful contrast with the rich and abundant verdure of the far-reaching prairie land lying just beyond them.

When the schooner "Tracy" arrived at

THE STORY OF

Chicago she anchored half a mile from shore and discharged her cargo by boats; for a long sand-bar, with its surface slightly higher than the lake level, forced the current of the river to follow the shore toward the south before finding an outlet into the lake, and even then over a broad stretch of shallow water, thus preventing the entrance of the vessel into the river channel. "Some two thousand Indians," said an eyewitness in an interview reported many years later, "visited the locality while the vessel was here, being attracted by so unusual an occurrence as the appearance in these waters of 'a big canoe with wings.'"

But notwithstanding the astonishment of the Indians, it was probably not the first time that sailing vessels had visited the shores of the future site of Chicago. William Burnett, the trader at St. Joseph before referred to, in writing to a merchant in Mackinac in 1786, makes a request that a vessel be sent to St. Joseph to take on board a quantity of grain, and further says regarding the expected vessel, "If she is to come to Chicago you can very likely get her to stop at the mouth of the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

river"—that is, the St. Joseph River. It is probable enough, however, that the great majority of the Indians around Chicago, who gazed with so much interest at the sight of the wonderful "canoe with wings," had never before seen a craft with sails spread to the breeze.

The "Tracy" was a vessel of ninety tons' burden, and belonged to the United States Government. After the goods were unloaded they were placed in tents to await the completion of the buildings. At the end of five days the vessel departed on her return voyage to Detroit, and on board of her Lieutenant Swearingen took passage.

Later in the summer the fort was ready for occupancy, and its garrison of United States regulars took possession of the barracks and dwellings within the stockade. The fort was named in honor of General Henry Dearborn, who had been a distinguished officer of the Revolutionary War, as well as Secretary of War at the time of the building of the fort.

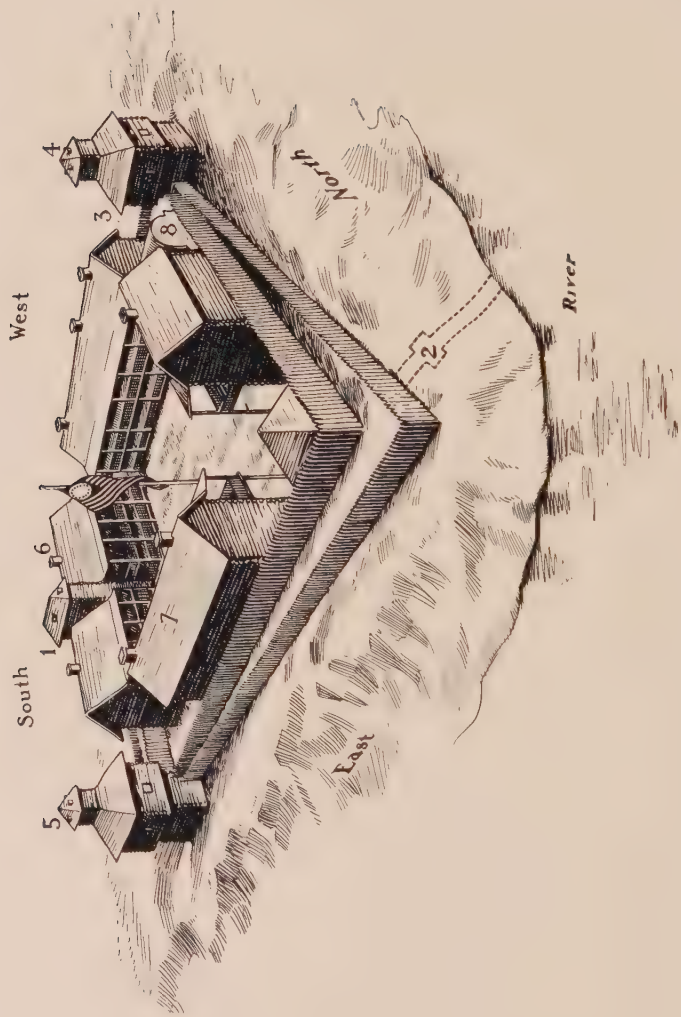
The fort was located on the south bank of the Chicago River near the present Rush

THE STORY OF

Street bridge, somewhat north of the spot marked by a tablet placed in recent years upon a building at the intersection of Michigan Avenue and River Street. The river, as is well known, is deflected from its general east and west direction at a point just east of the present State Street bridge. Owing, however, to the construction of the drainage canal a few years ago, the river now flows *from* the lake so that when it reaches the point mentioned, its course, instead of northeast forty rods, as formerly, is now southwest.

But at the time the fort was built the bend in the river reached much farther toward the north. In later years the south bank was partially dredged away, and the bend was therefore considerably lessened. Thus the site of the fort, being close to the river bank, was some distance farther north than the building upon which the tablet is placed; in fact, the northern portion of the fort extended over ground now covered by the bed of the river.

It may be well to remark here that in the year 1833 a channel was dredged through the bar directly in line with the river's course.



OLD FORT DEARBORN

The old channel between the sand-bar and the shore gradually became filled up in the course of years, and at the present day it is wholly covered by a mass of earth, and forms a part of the area enclosed in Grant Park.

In the construction of the fort there were two blockhouses erected, one at the southeast and the other at the northwest corner of the stockaded enclosure. These blockhouses projected partially beyond the line of pickets so that their defenders could command the approaches from the open spaces without the fort. On the north side of the fort there was a sally-port with a subterranean passage, leading from the parade ground within to the river bank, designed as a means of escape in case of emergency, or of obtaining a supply of water if needed, though a well was sunk for the ordinary uses of the garrison within the fort enclosure. Beyond the main line of pickets another similar line was placed at a different angle converging toward the blockhouses, thus providing two strong palisades entirely surrounding the fort.

A plan for the construction of frontier forts

THE STORY OF

was prepared by the War Department and this plan was referred to in a letter of instructions written by General Dearborn under date of June 28, 1804. While it thus appears that the letter was written a year later than the building of Fort Dearborn, it was an outline of the general principles by which the department had been governed in all such works.

"Being of the opinion," wrote General Dearborn, "that for the general defense of our country we ought not to rely upon fortifications, but on men and steel, and that works calculated for resisting batteries of cannon are necessary only for our principal seaports, I cannot conceive it useful or expedient to construct expensive works for our interior military posts, especially such as are intended merely to hold the Indians in check."

He added that he had directed stockade works "aided by blockhouses" to be erected at Vincennes, "Chikago" and at other places, "in conformity with the sketch herewith enclosed." The details of the plan are further described in the letter as follows: "The blockhouses to be constructed of timber

OLD FORT DEARBORN

slightly hewed," and the magazines to be of brick "of a conic figure," each capable of receiving from fifty to one hundred barrels of powder. "The blockhouses," he continued, "are to be so placed as to scour from the upper and lower stories the whole of the lines."

The plan thus outlined was followed in the construction of Fort Dearborn as well as of other forts generally along the frontier.

Three pieces of light artillery composed the armament of the fort, until at a later time another gun was added, and in a magazine constructed for the purpose was stored the necessary ammunition.

Directly west of the fort, fronting toward the river, was built a double log house, between the two parts of which an open passage was left, though the roof was made continuous over both portions as well as over the open passage. Along the front and rear a veranda extended the full length of the structure. This building was the Agency House, or United States Factory, used for storing goods to be sold to the Indians under Government regulations. For a number of

THE STORY OF

years, from 1796 to 1822, the United States supplied goods to the Indian tribes at many places on the frontier in exchange for their furs. In these exchanges the Government's policy was to deal with the Indians on an equitable basis, providing them protection against the rapacity of the traders, many of whom swindled them unmercifully.

It may be said in passing that this benevolent purpose on the part of the Government was completely frustrated. The traders supplied their savage customers with liquor, which the Government agents were not at liberty to do, and thus the Indians preferred to do business with the former in spite of the lower prices and superior quality of the goods furnished by the latter. In 1822, the "Factory System," as it was called, was discontinued entirely.

For many years previous to the building of Fort Dearborn a substantial dwelling had been standing on the opposite side of the river, near the present foot of Pine Street. This house was built by a man named Jean Baptiste Point de Saible, a native of San Do-

OLD FORT DEARBORN

mingo and a negro, some time before 1779, as appears from a report made by Colonel De Peyster, the commander at Michilimackinac during the British occupation.

De Saible was an Indian trader. One of the pioneers who remembered him said of him that he was "pretty wealthy and drank freely," and the British commander above referred to wrote that he was "much in the French interest," which gave occasion to that officer to keep a close watch on his activities, situated as he was at the principal portage between the Lakes and the Mississippi. De Saible resided in this house for over eighteen years, and in 1797 sold it and returned to the Peoria Indians, among whom he had previously resided, and remained with them the rest of his life.

The purchaser of the house was a man named Le Mai, a French trader. Le Mai made some improvements and occupied the house until 1804, when he in turn sold it to John Kinzie, who arrived with his family at Chicago in the fall of that year. After the house came into the possession of John Kinzie

THE STORY OF

he repaired it, added a veranda, and planted four Lombardy poplars at the foot of the slope on which the house stood. The house faced toward the south, having the river directly in front and the lake a short distance to the east.

This house became known as the "Kinzie Mansion" and is a familiar and picturesque object in the views of early Chicago. The house escaped the general destruction at the time of the massacre and remained the residence of John Kinzie and his family until the time of his death, in 1828, except during the four years of his enforced absence, from 1812 to 1816. The house was finally demolished in the early thirties after more than a half-century's existence.

There was also the less pretentious cabin of Antoine Ouilmette, situated close in the rear of the Kinzie house. Ouilmette was a Frenchman with an Indian wife, and had lived here since 1790. His wife, being a member of the Potawatami tribe, was awarded, at one of the Indian treaties many years later, a tract of land on the north shore



OLD FORT DEARBORN

about fourteen miles from the mouth of the Chicago River, which became known as the "Wilmette Reservation," and is now the site of the village of Wilmette.

A man named Pettell also had a small cabin near the Kinzie house. Over on the North Branch another trader named Guarie had a trading house which had been there from a time previous to the year 1778. Guarie's house was situated on the west bank of the river, about where Fulton Street now ends. The North Branch was called by the Indian traders and *voyageurs* of those days the "River Guarie," and the South Branch "Portage River," the name Chicago River being confined to that part of the river below the confluence of those two streams.

Captain John Whistler, after serving seven years as commandant at Fort Dearborn, was ordered to another post early in the summer of 1810, and his successor was Captain Nathan Heald, of whom we shall have much more to say in the following pages. In bidding adieu to Captain Whistler it is proper to add a few particulars concerning him. He was

THE STORY OF

a native of Ireland, and had come to America as a British soldier at the time of the War of the Revolution. He was in Burgoyne's army and was taken prisoner by the Americans when that army was surrendered after the battle of Saratoga in 1777.

After the war he decided to remain in America and took up his residence in Maryland, where he married, and where his son William was born. Later he enlisted in the American army, taking part in the campaigns against the Indians in the West. His loyalty to his new allegiance is shown in the naming of his youngest son after the "Father of His Country."

Captain Whistler served in the army of General Arthur St. Clair and afterward in that of General Anthony Wayne, and in time was promoted to be a captain of infantry. After leaving Fort Dearborn he was transferred to Fort Wayne and the rank of major was bestowed upon him. He died in 1827.

John Whistler was a brave and efficient soldier and the progenitor of a distinguished posterity. His son William was, as we have seen,

OLD FORT DEARBORN

a lieutenant in his father's company, and long after the events we are here treating of was placed in command of Fort Dearborn (in the year 1832), and his daughter became the wife of Robert A. Kinzie, one of the sons of John Kinzie, the pioneer. George Washington Whistler, the infant son of Captain John Whistler, was brought to Fort Dearborn in 1803, as we have already narrated, and afterward was graduated at West Point. Eventually he resigned his commission in the United States army and entered the service of the Russian Government as an engineer, where he rendered distinguished services.

The eminent painter, James A. McNeill Whistler, was a descendant of Captain John Whistler. In the life of Whistler, the artist, by Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell, it is mentioned that Whistler once said to a visitor from Chicago that he (Whistler) ought to visit the place some day, "for," said he, "you know, my grandfather founded the city."

John Kinzie has been called "The Father of Chicago," and also "Chicago's Pioneer." He was born at Quebec about the year 1763,

THE STORY OF

and he was therefore about forty years of age when he arrived in Chicago, in 1804. His father was a Scotchman named John McKenzie, but instead of retaining his patronymic in the usual manner, John of Quebec changed it to conform to a usage established by his boyish companions and others, who called him "Little Johnny Kinzie."

Young John's father died while he was yet an infant; the widow married William Forsyth, and soon thereafter the family moved to New York. Here he was placed in school, but at the age of ten he ran away and took passage on a sloop bound for Albany, with the purpose of finding his way back to his old home at Quebec. By good fortune he found a friendly fellow traveler bound for the same destination, who assisted him on the way. Arriving at Quebec he found employment with a silversmith and learned the trade. He remained with the silversmith three years, at the expiration of which time he returned to his parents, who had in the meantime removed to Detroit.

John Kinzie had an active and enterprising

OLD FORT DEARBORN

disposition which led him as he grew older to live much upon the frontier. He entered the Indian trade while he was yet very young and became an adept in his intercourse with the Indians. He learned their language and was esteemed by them as a reliable and fair-dealing trader. He soon began trading on his own account, and before he came to Chicago he had trading establishments at Sandusky and Maumee, and pushing farther west, he established a post at St. Joseph. It was in the pursuance of a general policy of business expansion that he bought the Le Mai house at Chicago, a house which afterward became historic. Kinzie himself has become of historic importance to a degree he could never have dreamed of, and which would not have been possible but for the fact that the place he chose for his residence has since become one of the world's great cities.

While by no means the first settler at Chicago, John Kinzie is generally accorded the title of "Chicago's Pioneer," although it is quite probable that there were traders, hunters, and trappers residing here for longer or

THE STORY OF

shorter periods even earlier than De Saible and Le Mai.

“I doubt if any known person can safely be called the ‘earliest settler’ of Chicago,” writes Thwaites. “The habitants and traders went back and forth like Arabs. No doubt there was a succession of temporary visitors residing any time from a few months to several years at this site during the entire French regime, but especially in the eighteenth century, concerning which period the records are unfortunately scanty.”

When John Kinzie arrived here he found Ouilmette, Pettell, Le Mai, and Guarie, all of whom were permanent residents. Mr. Kinzie was a man of character and influence. He had been well educated for those times, and possessed civic virtues in an eminent degree. Through all the vicissitudes of frontier life he maintained and brought up a large family, assisted those who were related to him as step-children and half-brothers, and his descendants became honorable members of the community with which they were identified.

Mr. Kinzie was generally known as the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

"Indians' Friend," and had received from them the name of Shaw-ne-aw-kee; that is, *Silverman*, on account of his having learned the trade of a silversmith, which he practiced on occasion.

When he came here from Detroit Mr. Kinzie was accompanied by his family, consisting of his wife and son, John Harris Kinzie, then an infant one year old, and his step-daughter, Margaret McKillip. Three other children were born to Mr. and Mrs. Kinzie during the next few years, and at the time of the massacre these children as well as their parents escaped harm through the assistance of several friendly Indian chiefs.

Excepting the four years following the massacre, the Kinzie family resided here until the death of Mr. Kinzie, in 1828, at the age of sixty-five years. His widow and some of his children continued their residence in Chicago until long after the middle of the century.

A few words concerning the earlier life of the remarkable woman who was the wife of John Kinzie will be appropriate in this place. Previous to her marriage to Mr. Kinzie, in

THE STORY OF

1800, Mrs. Kinzie was a widow, her first husband having been a Captain McKillip, serving in the British army, who had been killed in the year 1794. Her daughter, Margaret McKillip, afterward became the wife of Lieutenant Linai T. Helm, one of the officers at Fort Dearborn.

Mrs. Kinzie's maiden name was Eleanor Lytle, and when a child she lived with her parents in Western Pennsylvania. When but nine years of age she was carried off by Indians and adopted as a sister by a chief of the Seneca tribe. After four years of captivity she was safely restored to her parents. Writing of her experiences at this time, so similar to those of thousands of other children captives, the author of *Wau-Bun* (who it will be remembered was a daughter-in-law of Mrs. John Kinzie) says: "Four years had now elapsed since the capture of little Nelly. Her heart was by nature warm and affectionate, so that the unbounded tenderness of those she dwelt among had called forth a corresponding feeling of affection in her heart. She regarded the chief and his mother

OLD FORT DEARBORN

with love and reverence, and had so completely learned their language and customs as almost to have forgotten her own.

“So identified had she become with the tribe that the remembrance of her home and family had nearly faded from her memory; all but her mother—her mother whom she had loved with a strength of affection natural to her warm and ardent character, and to whom her heart still clung with a fondness that no time or change could destroy.”

The peace of 1783 between Great Britain and the United States was followed by a general pacification of the Indian tribes, and the chief who held little Nelly captive was invited to a council fire at Fort Niagara by Colonel William Johnson, a man celebrated for his wonderful popularity and influence with the Indians of New York State, and the chief was requested to bring the little captive with him. The invitation was accepted, but not before a promise was made that there should be no effort to reclaim the child.

The parents of the child were anxious to behold once more the form and features of

THE STORY OF

their offspring, and came to Fort Niagara for the purpose. "The time at length arrived," runs the narrative, "when, her heart bounding with joy, little Nelly was placed on horseback to accompany her Indian brother to the great council of the Senecas. She had promised him that she would never leave him without permission, and he relied confidently on her word.

"As the chiefs and warriors arrived in successive bands to meet their 'father,' the agent, at the council fire, how did the anxious hearts of the parents beat with alternate hope and fear! The officers of the fort had kindly given them quarters for the time being, and the ladies, whose sympathies were strongly excited, had accompanied the mother to the place of council, and joined in her longing watch for the first appearance of the band from the Alleghany River.

"At length they were discerned, emerging from the forest on the opposite or American side. Boats were sent across by the commanding officer to bring the chief and his party. The father and mother, attended by all the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

officers and ladies, stood upon the grassy bank awaiting their approach. They had seen at a glance that the little captive was with them."

The chief held the little maiden's hand while crossing the river, and when the boat touched the bank he saw the child spring forward into the arms of her waiting mother from whom she had been so long separated. When the chief witnessed this outburst of affection he was deeply moved, and could no longer continue steadfast in his resolution to retain possession of the child.

"She shall go," said he. "The mother must have her child again. I will go back alone."

"With one silent gesture of farewell," says the writer, "he turned and stepped on board the boat. No arguments or entreaties could induce him to remain at the council; but having gained the other side of the Niagara, he mounted his horse, and with his young men was soon lost in the depths of the sheltering forest."

Soon afterward the parents of Eleanor Lytle removed to Detroit and it was there

THE STORY OF

when but fourteen years of age that she met and married Captain McKillip.

The writer of the narrative from which the above sketch has been derived was Mrs. Juliette A. Kinzie, the wife of John Harris Kinzie, who was the oldest child of John Kinzie and Eleanor (Lytle) McKillip Kinzie. Mrs. John H. Kinzie wrote a book, already mentioned, called *Wau-Bun*, which was published in 1856, in which are a number of sketches of Chicago's early settlers, and an account of the period extending over the occupation and destruction of the first Fort Dearborn. Her book is the earliest and most substantial contribution to Chicago history of the period referred to that we possess.

It is gratifying to be able to state that the granddaughter of the "little Nelly" of the narrative, who was so wonderfully restored to her own people after all those years of captivity, is Mrs. Nelly Kinzie Gordon, now residing in Savannah, Georgia. Though now nearly eighty years of age, Mrs. Gordon is in possession of all her faculties to a remarkable degree, and seems indeed to have pre-

OLD FORT DEARBORN

served the freshness of her youth in body and mind. She takes a sympathetic and intelligent interest in all the historical writings having to do with the early history of Chicago, where she was born and where she lived many years of her life, and she is always ready to aid inquirers with advice and suggestions.

The interior arrangements of the Kinzie house were described by Mrs. Elizabeth Baird, who as a child visited the Kinzies at Chicago in company with her mother. The family of which Mrs. Baird was a member lived on the island of Mackinac and came to Chicago in a lake vessel loaded with a cargo of supplies.

The account written by Mrs. Baird in her old age is printed in the Wisconsin Historical Society's collections. She remembers distinctly the house and its surroundings. "It was a large, one-story building," she said, "with an exceptionally high attic. The front door opened into a wide hall that led through to the kitchen, which was spacious and bright, made so by the large fireplace. Four rooms

THE STORY OF

opened into the hall, two on each side, and the attic contained four rooms." There was room in the house for all the members of the Kinzie family besides quite a number of servants and helpers.

The only way of crossing the river, she says, was by a wooden canoe or "dugout," which was used even by the children, who became very skillful in navigating the deep and slow-moving stream which separated the house from the fort. Besides amusing themselves in the canoe, often called a pirogue, the children found delight in running among the sand-hills along the lake shore and "tumbling down their sides."

Mrs. Baird was the daughter of a half-breed mother whose mother was a member of the Ottawa tribe of Indians. "To know we had Indian blood in our veins," she writes, "was in one respect a safeguard, in another a great risk. Each tribe was ever at enmity with the others. No one could foretell what might happen when by chance two or more tribes should meet or encamp at any one place at the same time. This, however, would be



JOHN H. KINZIE



JULIETTE A. KINZIE

OLD FORT DEARBORN

of rare occurrence. Unless on the warpath Indians keep by themselves."

John Harris Kinzie, the oldest son of John Kinzie, spent the years from his infancy to the age of nine living with his parents in the Kinzie mansion. There were no schools in the vicinity, and young John had to depend upon chance opportunities of obtaining the rudiments of an education. It is related that among the supplies consigned to John Kinzie, arriving by the "annual schooner," there was found a spelling book inside a chest of tea which the elder Kinzie gave to his son. With the aid of his father's step-brother, Robert Forsyth, then a member of Mr. Kinzie's family, young John learned his first lessons. In later years he said the odor of tea always reminded him of the spelling book he used to study in his boyhood.

The children of the Kinzie family, as well as those of the officers and soldiers at the fort who had their families with them,—as a number of them did,—were formed into classes and taught by a soldier of some education whose term of service had expired,

THE STORY OF

but on account of his irregular habits the school was discontinued after some months.

A brief sketch of General Henry Dearborn, already referred to in this history, should be given in this place. The name of Dearborn is often met with among Chicago localities and institutions; and the city is honored in thus perpetuating the name and memory of a man who, though he had never visited this vicinity, held positions of responsibility and honor in the affairs of the country.

General Dearborn was a native of New Hampshire, and at the time of the establishment of Fort Dearborn was a man somewhat past fifty years of age. After passing through the best schools of the State in which he was born he studied medicine and practiced that profession for some years before the breaking out of the Revolutionary War. At an early period in that struggle he raised a company of militia and joined a regiment commanded by Colonel John Stark, who afterward became the hero of the battle of Bennington. As a captain young Dearborn took part in the battle of Bunker Hill, and at a later time

OLD FORT DEARBORN

was with Arnold on his unsuccessful expedition to Canada, where he was taken prisoner by the British. He was exchanged and again entered the service, and as major assisted in the capture of Burgoyne's army at the battle of Saratoga.

It is related in a recent history:

During this campaign he kept a journal, which is now preserved in the Boston Public Library. The entry made the day of the surrender is as follows:

"This day the great Mr. Burgoyne with his whole army surrendered themselves as prisoners of war with all their public stores; and after grounding their arms marched off for New England — the greatest conquest ever known."

At a later period of the war Dearborn was promoted to be lieutenant-colonel and was present at the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781. After this event he wrote in his journal: "Here ends my military life." He was, however, afterwards commissioned a major-general of militia by the State of Massachusetts, of which State he was a citizen. He became a member of Congress in 1801, and was appointed Secretary of War by President Jefferson. He remained in the

THE STORY OF

cabinet of President Jefferson throughout the eight years of his administration.

In the War of 1812 General Dearborn was appointed senior major-general by President Madison, and rendered distinguished services on the Niagara frontier during that war. He died in Boston at the advanced age of seventy-nine years.

A portrait of General Dearborn is at the present time in the possession of the Calumet Club of Chicago, painted by Gilbert Stuart. John Wentworth once said: "One of the highest compliments paid to General Dearborn is the fact that whilst the names of so many of our streets have been changed to gratify the whims of our aldermen, no attempt has been made to change that of Dearborn Street. Not only is this the case but the name Dearborn continues to be prefixed to institutions, enterprises, and objects which it is the desire of projectors to honor."

There was an interpreter at the fort, John Lalime by name, who was at enmity with John Kinzie, the Indian trader. One afternoon early in the year 1812, Mr. Kinzie had

OLD FORT DEARBORN

occasion to be at the fort, and when the gates were about to be closed for the night he passed out to return to his home across the river. Just after his departure Lalime also passed out at the gate, and knowing the state of feeling between the two men, Lieutenant Helm, who was the officer on duty, called out to Mr. Kinzie to beware of Lalime. The latter was following the other closely and his actions were threatening.

Lieutenant Helm had married Mr. Kinzie's step-daughter, Margaret McKillip, some years before, and the relationship thus existing doubtless caused a feeling of natural anxiety on the part of the officer for Mr. Kinzie's safety. When Mr. Kinzie heard the warning shout he turned suddenly upon the man following him and at the same time saw that he was armed with a pistol in his hand and a knife in his belt. Mr. Kinzie himself was totally unprovided with weapons, but notwithstanding, he grappled with Lalime at once. In the course of the struggle which ensued the pistol was discharged, though without harm to either antagonist. Both men

THE STORY OF

attempted to get possession of the knife and both were wounded by it. Mr. Kinzie, however, succeeded in inflicting a fatal thrust upon his adversary, while he himself was covered with blood as a result of the encounter. Lalime fell dead upon the ground.

This tragic affair was witnessed by the people at the fort, and by a half-breed woman who was a servant in the Kinzie family from the door of the Kinzie house. As Lalime had many friends at the fort who at first thought that Mr. Kinzie had attacked him without provocation there was a movement to take Kinzie into custody; and fearing that a squad would be sent for this purpose, he concealed himself in the woods near his house, and soon after embarked in a boat with an Indian guide for Milwaukee, where one of his trading posts was located.

An inquiry into all the circumstances of the affair was made by the officers of the garrison, and a verdict of justifiable homicide was reached. Mr. Kinzie, hearing of this, returned to his home as soon as he had sufficiently recovered from his wound to do so.

OLD FORT DEARBORN

It was said by Gurdon S. Hubbard in later years that Mr. Kinzie deeply regretted the killing of Lalime, and further, that he firmly believed the deed was committed in self-defence. Lalime was an educated man and was a favorite with the military people. He was buried on the north side of the river, and for many years thereafter the grave was enclosed with a small picket fence, which was cared for by Mr. Kinzie and his family.

When Captain Nathan Heald assumed command at Fort Dearborn, in succession to Captain Whistler, he entered upon his duties with much reluctance, owing to the remoteness of the post and the loneliness of its situation. He was a much younger man than his predecessor, being at the time thirty-five years of age and unmarried, and found himself associated with officers still younger than he was. A few days after his arrival at his new post he wrote Colonel Jacob Kingsbury, commandant at Detroit, that he was not pleased with his situation and could not bear to think of staying there during the win-

THE STORY OF

ter. "It is a good place," he wrote, "for a man who has a family, and can content himself to live remote from the civilized part of the world."

Two years previous to this time Captain William Wells had taken his niece, Rebekah Wells, daughter of his brother, Captain Samuel Wells of Louisville, Kentucky, to Fort Wayne on a visit, and while there she met Captain Heald, who was on duty at that point. In the summer following Heald's arrival at Fort Dearborn he obtained a leave of absence for the purpose of going to Louisville to be married to Rebekah Wells. The marriage followed his arrival there and was doubtless the result of the acquaintance formed at the time of the Fort Wayne visit, the first of many romantic episodes.

The journey of the newly wedded couple from the old Kentucky home to their new place of residence at Fort Dearborn was made in May, 1811, and it is interesting to learn that the whole distance was covered in six days. There were three in the party—the captain, his bride, and a little slave girl who

OLD FORT DEARBORN

begged to be taken along. Each had a horse to ride, and an extra horse carried the baggage; they traveled by compass.

On their arrival the garrison turned out to receive them with military honors. Rebekah was much pleased with her reception, and found everything to her liking; she liked the wild place, the wild lake, and the wild Indians, then indeed friendly enough, but soon to become fierce enemies. Everything suited her ways and disposition, "being on the wild order" herself, she said; and we can well imagine Captain Heald becoming, in his changed circumstances, quite reconciled to the situation with which he was so much displeased the year before.

Captain Heald was a martinet in the matter of military discipline, and during the two years or more that elapsed between his arrival and the evacuation of the fort he became unpopular by reason of his strict insistence upon every detail required by the military regulations. It had become the recognized practice in isolated garrisons at lonely posts to relax somewhat the discipline usually found

THE STORY OF

necessary where large numbers of troops were assembled.

But while Captain Heald was so exacting in the affairs of the post, he applied the same principles to his own conduct where the orders of his superior officers were concerned, even when conditions would have warranted independent action.

Heald would have been an ideal officer on the staff of a general where it was necessary to render instant and implicit obedience to orders, and in such a position his services would have been without doubt faithful and efficient. But when serving at a distant post, where much latitude in complying with instructions might have been permitted and justified, he failed to use the discretion that he was unquestionably entitled to exercise under such circumstances. Heald was not able to see beyond the letter of his instructions, and to the literal manner in which he construed them may be attributed in great measure the disasters that overtook the fort and its occupants.

Captain William Wells, the hero of the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

story we are here relating, was born about 1770, in Kentucky. His career throughout is surrounded with an atmosphere of romance. When Mr. Roosevelt was writing his *Winning of the West*, he did not fail to see the picturesque figure of Captain Wells among the pioneer scenes which he there delineates with characteristic vigor and sympathy. We commemorate his name and deeds in our street nomenclature of the present day, and the historical interest which attaches to the name of Wells Street would be worthily supplemented by the people of Chicago in the erection of a statue to his memory.

William Wells and Samuel Wells, the noted Indian fighters, were brothers living in Louisville, Kentucky, belonging to a family of early settlers in that region. When twelve years of age, William was carried off by a band of Miami Indians, whose chief, Little Turtle, adopted him in his family. With this tribe William remained some years, and when he arrived at manhood the chief gave him his daughter in marriage. He became greatly attached to the people of the tribe, and in the

THE STORY OF

disastrous campaigns of Generals Harmer and St. Clair, in 1790 and 1791, when those two generals were successively defeated, he fought with his tribe against the Americans.

The Wells family learned of William's presence with the Indians and of the attachment he had formed for savage life and society, and during one of the intervals of peaceful relations they endeavored to win him back to his early home and family connection. Messages were sent to him begging him to abandon his savage life and return to his family. Referring to this period in the life of William Wells, Rebekah Wells, his niece, said: "We all wanted Uncle William, whom we called our 'Indian Uncle,' to leave the Indians who had stolen him in his boyhood, and come home and belong to his white relations. He hung back for years, and even at last when he agreed to visit them the proviso was made that he should be allowed to bring along an Indian escort with him, so that he should not be compelled to stay with them if he did not want to do so."

Accordingly he came with a company of



Rebekah Wood.



William Wells.

OLD FORT DEARBORN

his Indian friends, and after seeing the old places and meeting once more with his relatives, he became convinced that he ought to remain with them, though he decided first to return to his father-in-law, Little Turtle, for whom he felt a strong attachment, and acquaint him with his determination. He frankly told the chief that though he had lived happily among his tribe for many years, had fought for them in the past against the whites, the time had now come when he was going home to his relatives, thereafter to live with and fight for his own flesh and blood.

He was permitted to depart, and soon after joined the army of General Anthony Wayne, who had been sent into the Western country by President Washington to repair the disasters that had overtaken the Americans in the previous campaigns. He was made captain of a company of scouts, and performed effective service in the march of Wayne's army through the wilderness, ending with the battle of Fallen Timbers, in the fall of 1794.

Mr. Roosevelt, in the work to which we have already referred, relates some of Wells's

THE STORY OF

thrilling adventures while engaged in this service, among others the following:

On one of Wells's scouts he and his companions came across a family of Indians in a canoe by the river bank. The white woodrangers were as ruthless as their red foes, sparing neither sex nor age; and the scouts were cocking their rifles when Wells recognized the Indians as being the family into which he had been adopted, and by which he had been treated as a son and brother. Springing forward he swore immediate death to the first man who fired; and then told his companions who the Indians were. The scouts at once dropped their weapons, shook hands with the Miamis, and sent them off unharmed.

After the campaign had terminated in the utter defeat of the tribes, Captain Wells was joined by his Indian wife and children. Wells settled on a farm and was made a justice of the peace and appointed Indian agent at Fort Wayne. His children "grew up and married well in the community," says Roosevelt in his history, "so that their blood now flows in the veins of many of the descendants of the old pioneers." One of these descendants, writing to the Hon. John Wentworth at Chicago, said of his ancestors: "We are proud of our Indian (Little Turtle) blood, and of our Captain

OLD FORT DEARBORN

Wells blood. We try to keep up the customs of our ancestors, and dress occasionally in Indian costumes. We take no exceptions when people speak of our Indian parentage." Referring to the later services of Captain Wells in the Tippecanoe campaign and of his tragic end at the Fort Dearborn massacre, this letter-writer further says: "We take pleasure in sending to you the tomahawk which Captain Wells had at the time of his death, and which was brought to his family by an Indian who was in the battle. We also have a dress sword which was presented to him by General William Henry Harrison, and a great many books which he had, showing that even when he lived among the Indians he was trying to improve himself."

Wells was indeed a man of fair education for those times, as his correspondence, preserved in the *American State Papers*, shows. Wentworth, in one of his lectures, printed in the *Fergus Historical Series*, says that all of Captain Wells's children were well educated, one of them, William Wayne Wells, having graduated at West Point in 1821.

THE STORY OF

Little Turtle, the Miami chief, and father-in-law of Captain Wells, became reconciled to the Americans after Wayne's victory at the battle of Fallen Timbers, and indeed became their fast friend to the end of his life. In 1797, three years after the battle, Captain Wells accompanied Little Turtle on a visit to the East, and no doubt met President Washington himself at the seat of government, which was at that time in Philadelphia. Little Turtle was frequently at Chicago during the following years, but lived near Fort Wayne, where he died in July, 1812. This was only a few weeks before the dreadful massacre of that year. Wells himself was also a frequent visitor at Chicago during these years and was thoroughly familiar with the surrounding country.

Some account of the Indian tribes and their chiefs will aid the reader in obtaining a clearer knowledge of the conditions and surroundings of the garrison and the few civilian traders dwelling at this remote outpost of the frontier, during the next few years after the establishment of Fort Dearborn.

OLD FORT DEARBORN

The Potawatamis were the principal tribe of Indians met with by the whites in the vicinity of Fort Dearborn in 1803, and they continued here until their final removal to their new reservations in 1835. Other tribes were represented by occasional parties camping in their wigwams on the banks of the river near the fort. Among such visitors were Winnebagoes, Miamis, Ottawas, and Chippewas.

When the early explorers passed over the Chicago Portage more than a century before, they found the Illinois Indians in possession of most of the territory of what is now the northern portion of Illinois; but their country was frequently invaded by the Iroquois Indians from the East and their allies, and their numbers rapidly diminished, until the last remnant of the tribe was exterminated, about the year 1770, at Starved Rock, on the Illinois River. It is worthy of notice here that more Indians perished and more tribes were exterminated in intertribal conflicts than in all the wars that have taken place between the white race and the red.

The Potawatami tribe had formerly made

THE STORY OF

their abiding-place near the shores of Green Bay, except when roaming in quest of game into neighboring regions. A portion of the tribe, which was scattered over the southern peninsula of Michigan and continually advancing toward the south, began to press upon the Illinois tribes, which included, besides the Illinois, the Kickapoos and Miamis. The Indians from Michigan in time succeeded in reaching the region of the Chicago Portage, where they met the southward advance of their former friends from Wisconsin, from whom they had been long separated. The Michigan Indians, when they appeared in this region, became known as the "Potawatamis of the Woods," or "Woods Indians," while those who had come from Wisconsin more recently, having in their movements wandered over the prairie country, became known as the "Potawatamis of the Prairies," or the "Prairie Band." The latter were also often referred to as "Plains Indians." The two divisions of the tribe, having thus met after so long a separation, had become quite different from each other in

OLD FORT DEARBORN

their habits and customs, and also in their disposition and character.

The Woods Indians were engaged in agriculture to some extent, and were susceptible to the influences of civilization and religion; the Prairie Indians "despised the cultivation of the soil," says Judge Caton, "as too mean even for their women and children, and deemed the captures of the chase the only fit food for a valorous people." In other respects the two divisions were regarded as a single tribe. The northern portion of Illinois was particularly the possession of the Potawatamis, over which they ranged freely, though Chicago and its immediate vicinity was the most important point in their territory where councils were held and trading was carried on.

Caton writes:

The relations existing between the Potawatamis and the Ottawas were of the most harmonious character. They lived together almost as one people, and were joint owners of their hunting grounds. Their relations were quite as intimate and friendly as existed among the different bands of the same tribe. Nor were the Chippewas scarcely more strangers to the

THE STORY OF

Potawatamis and the Ottawas than the latter were to each other. They claimed an interest in the land occupied, to a certain extent by all jointly, so that all three tribes joined in the first treaty for the sale of their lands ever made to the United States.

The relations existing between the whites in and around Fort Dearborn and their Indian neighbors were generally harmonious throughout the interval of time from the first occupation of the fort in 1803 until 1811, when Tecumseh became active in stirring up the Western tribes to oppose the settlement of Western lands by the whites. Tecumseh was a chief of the Shawnee tribe, whose country was on the lower Wabash. He believed that this country was created by the Great Spirit for the exclusive use of the Indians, and that the grants of land made by the tribes in their treaties with the United States Government were not valid or binding unless the consent of "all the tribes of the continent" had been obtained.

This contention was regarded as preposterous, and Tecumseh was informed that such a principle could not be allowed. He then succeeded in forming a league of several tribes

OLD FORT DEARBORN

under his leadership, and hostilities soon after began against the settlers and the United States Government. In November, 1811, the battle of Tippecanoe was fought between General William Henry Harrison, Governor of Indiana Territory, and commander of the American forces, on the one hand, and the tribes under Tecumseh's brother, the "Prophet," on the other, Tecumseh himself being temporarily absent. The Indians were badly defeated. Tecumseh took refuge in Canada, where he joined the British, who were soon afterwards at war with the United States. He was killed while fighting on the side of the British at the battle of the Thames, October 6, 1813.

Many of the Indians of the Potawatami tribe sympathized with Tecumseh, and it was well known that some of the chiefs and many of the Indians were present at the battle of Tippecanoe among the enemies of the Americans. But in spite of the malign influence of Tecumseh, the Indians conducted themselves generally in a peaceable manner while in the vicinity of Fort Dearborn, and seemed anxious

THE STORY OF

to be regarded as friendly toward their white neighbors.

The Indians continued to come and go on their nomadic excursions according to their habit, and while in this vicinity they lived in their wigwams near the river, their favorite camping place being at a point on the south bank near the present State Street bridge. A swale or gully opened into the river there, reaching back as far as the present line of Randolph Street. The movements of the Indians were regarded with great interest by the traders located in the neighborhood; who were anxious to sell them supplies in exchange for the furs brought in by them; they were regarded with interest also by the officers and men of the garrison, who desired to maintain peaceable relations with their savage neighbors.

But while furs were the principal article offered in payment for goods obtained from the traders, the Indians also brought in quantities of maple sugar put up in birch-bark packages, which usually found ready sale among the settlers. These packages were called

OLD FORT DEARBORN

“barks” by some and “mococks” by others, each of them containing from twenty-five to fifty pounds. Birkbeck says, in his *Letters from Illinois*, written in 1818, that maple sugar could be purchased from the Indians for about twenty-five cents a pound, which was about the same price as the coarse brown or “muscovado” sugar from Louisiana was sold for. In his book of reminiscences of early Chicago, Gale tells us that he remembers as a boy how he prized the granulated maple sugar which he bought from the squaws, “put up in small birch-bark boxes, ornamented with colored grasses, and in large baskets made of the same material, holding some twenty-five pounds.” It was often called “Indian sugar.”

When the Indians visited the settlements it was their custom to wander about the streets in an aimless manner, stopping from time to time and taking a look into the window of any house they happened to be passing. The Indians, whether men, women, or children, would cover the tops of their heads with blankets to exclude the light, and press their faces against the window panes and gaze

THE STORY OF

intently into the houses for long periods at a time, to the great discomfort and even terror of the people within. If they wished to enter a house they did not pause to knock, but stalked in and squatted on the floor, and none dared to resist them or to order them to depart from the premises. "You always heard a man come in," says Mrs. Baird, in her narrative, "as his step was firm, proud, and full of dignity. The women, however, made no sound."

There were several chiefs of the Potawatami tribe whose names are well known in the historic annals of that time. One of them was Black Partridge, often called "the Partridge"; there were also Winnemeg, or, as he was sometimes called, Winamac; Wau-bansee; Topenebe; Billy Caldwell, otherwise known as Sauganash or "the Sauganash," meaning Englishman, as he was an educated half-breed; and Alexander Robinson.

On account of the close and friendly relations existing between the whites and the Potawatamis, the latter were usually spoken of as "our Indians," to distinguish them from those tribes whose hunting grounds were at

OLD FORT DEARBORN

a greater distance. The Winnebagoes from the north were occasional visitors to the neighborhood, as were also tribes from the south, — Miamis and others, — who were generally referred to as “Wabash Indians.”

When councils were held between the representatives of the Government and the tribes, to agree on a treaty, all those tribes were in attendance which could be allowed to have any claims to ownership of lands that were the subject of the treaties about to be made. At such assemblages, whenever they were held in the Western country, the Potawatamis were always found fully represented by their chiefs and a large number of their followers, insisting upon recognition of their claims; and they thus succeeded in getting the lion's share in the distributions made by the Government; and even though their claims were often vague and ill-defined they were always noisy and forward in asserting them. It thus happened that the Indians of the Potawatami tribe were greatly interested in keeping on good terms with the whites.

The Indians in their harangues described

THE STORY OF

an assemblage held for purposes of deliberation as a place where a council fire was lighted; and in referring to the United States Government the Indian orators spoke of the States of the Union—which in 1811 were seventeen in number—as the nation of “the Seventeen Fires,” that is, seventeen council fires.

In a former generation the Potawatamis were “French Indians” in their sympathies and trade relations; and this allegiance continued up to and even after the close of the French régime in 1763. They were reluctant to acknowledge the sway of the British during the period of their possession, but through the commanding influence of the New York Indians (the Iroquois or Six Nations) they kept the peace that was guaranteed by the Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768. This treaty was made between the English and the Iroquois with “their dependent tribes”; and it was understood that the said treaty bound the Western Indians, though afterwards the latter resented the proceedings. Narrowing the view to the Potawatami tribe, it appears that

OLD FORT DEARBORN

even while maintaining friendly relations with the Americans after the latter had succeeded to the sovereignty of the Western territories, the tribe was still to a certain extent under British influence. They shared in the gratuities annually distributed by the English at Malden, Canada; and, as the event will show, they at length became the enemies of the Americans after the War of 1812 had begun.

There was a tract of land under cultivation some four miles southwest of the fort, situated on the west bank of the South Branch of the Chicago River, about where at the present time the old Illinois and Michigan Canal opens into that stream. This tract was owned by a man named Charles Lee, and the farm was known as "Lee's place."

On this tract stood a log cabin in which a number of men employed by Lee lived and carried on the work of the farm. Lee himself lived with his family in a house near the fort on the bank of the river opposite where it discharged into the lake; which was near the present intersection of Madison Street and Michigan Avenue. It will be remembered

THE STORY OF

that in those days a long sandbar prevented the river from finding an outlet directly in line with its course, and the current was forced to creep along close to the shore for some distance toward the south.

Lee's place was also known as "Hardscrabble," a name which continued to be applied to that neighborhood for many decades thereafter. "The name of 'Hardscrabble,'" it is said in a recent history of Chicago, "has always been a favorite one among pioneers to describe a place in which conditions of existence were hard and difficult. A place of that name was situated near Lewiston, New York, on the Niagara River, about the same period, and is mentioned in military despatches during the ensuing War of 1812; and in the State of Illinois the town of Streator was thus colloquially known during its earlier history." Before the Civil War, General Grant lived on a farm near St. Louis, where he built a log cabin with his own hands and called it "Hardscrabble." The same name was given to a work of fiction by Major John Richardson, with the subtitle "A Tale of Indian War-



OLD FORT DEARBORN

fare." This work takes the events which occurred at Lee's place and bases upon them a romance the details of which the author supplied largely from his imagination. Many other examples of the use of this name might be given.

On the seventh of April of the fateful year 1812 the log house at Hardscrabble was occupied by three men and a boy. The man who seems to have been in charge of the work at the farm was one Liberty White, and with him were a discharged soldier, also a Frenchman named Debou, and the boy, a son of Mr. Lee's. Communication between the farm and the fort was usually maintained by means of canoes. The products of the farm found a ready market at the fort, thus supplementing the supplies for the garrison coming in the regular way by lake schooners.

On the afternoon of the day mentioned a party of soldiers from the fort, consisting of a corporal and six men, had obtained leave to go up the river to catch a supply of fish, with which the stream at that time abounded. The party went up the South Branch, passing Lee's

THE STORY OF

place, with the usual exchange of greetings, and at length reached a point some two miles beyond, where they remained engaged in fishing until nearly dark. Suddenly they were startled by hearing the dull boom of a cannon which they knew at once to be a danger signal from the fort, and as they surmised was caused by some manifestation of Indian hostility.

Hastily starting on their return, they soon came to Lee's place, which, they observed, was silent and deserted. It was now quite dark, and the party drew up to the bank, meantime calling and shouting, but receiving no answer. The mysterious silence which enveloped the place seemed to indicate that the occupants whom they had seen there a few hours before had suddenly become alarmed and had perhaps fled toward the fort, if indeed something worse had not befallen them. The corporal knew that the commandant would require a full report of the matter, and he at once began an investigation. Stepping ashore, the corporal and his men cautiously advanced toward the house, in which there

OLD FORT DEARBORN

was not a glimmer of light, and from which issued no sound of human voice. As they groped their way along they stumbled upon the body of a man lying on the ground, and by the sense of touch the corporal quickly ascertained that the head was without a scalp and the body mutilated. "The faithful dog of the murdered man," says the account from which the narrative is derived, "stood guarding the lifeless remains of his master." The party now reëmbarked and proceeded on their way to the fort without further adventure, where they arrived about eleven o'clock at night and made a report to the commandant of what they had seen.

We now return to the log house at Hard-scrabble and to the dreadful occurrences which took place there on that eventful afternoon. After the fishing party had passed up the river beyond the farmhouse a wandering band of Indians appeared at the door of the cabin, and according to the custom of savages they entered and seated themselves on the floor without ceremony. Their deportment was sullen and unfriendly, and

THE STORY OF

this circumstance aroused the suspicions of the men in the cabin. One of them, the Frenchman Debou, remarked to Liberty White: "I do not like the appearance of the Indians; they are none of our folks. I know by their dress and paint that they are not Potawatamis." Another one of the white men, the discharged soldier, then said to the boy Lee: "If that is the case we had better get away from them if we can. Say nothing, but do as you see me do."

As the afternoon was then far advanced, the discharged soldier passed out of the house and walked in a deliberate manner down the path toward the canoes tied up at the river bank, accompanied by the boy Lee. Some of the Indians inquired where they were going. The soldier pointed to the cattle standing among the haystacks on the opposite side of the river and made signs that they must go over and fodder them and that they would then come back and get supper for them all.

The boy got into one of the canoes while the man took possession of the other. The stream was narrow and they quickly passed over to

OLD FORT DEARBORN

the eastern side. Here they pulled some hay from the stacks for the cattle, and made a show of collecting them together, and when they had gradually made a circuit so that their movements were concealed by the haystacks they made a run for the woods which were near at hand and directed their course toward the fort as fast as their legs could carry them.

When they had covered a distance of a quarter of a mile in their flight they heard the sound of two gunshots, which they readily conjectured were fired by the strange Indians upon the two men, Liberty White and the Frenchman Debou. The man and boy did not slacken their speed until they had reached the river somewhere near the present location of State Street bridge. Here they paused long enough to call out to John Burns, then living in a cabin on the north bank of the river near that point, to hasten to the fort with his family, as the Indians were killing and scalping up the river at Lee's place.

Mrs. John Kinzie was at the Burns house at that moment to render what aid she could to Mrs. Burns, who but a few hours before

THE STORY OF

had been delivered of a child. She instantly left the house and ran to her own home, a quarter of a mile distant, to give the alarm and procure help for the sick woman. She found the family awaiting her return, the table spread for supper, while Mr. Kinzie was playing on his violin and the children dancing before the fire.

Rushing into the house, quite out of breath and pale with terror, she was only able to exclaim: "The Indians! the Indians!"

"The Indians? What? Where?" they all demanded at once. Recovering herself for a moment, she replied: "Up at Lee's place, killing and scalping!" She then proceeded to relate that while she was at Burns's house a man and boy were seen running with all speed along the opposite bank of the river; that they had called across the river, warning the Burns family to save themselves, for the Indians were at Lee's place, killing and scalping, and that they themselves had barely been able to make their escape. The man and boy had then continued on their way as fast as they could toward the fort, where they

OLD FORT DEARBORN

reported the terrifying news to the officers of the garrison.

"All was now consternation and dismay," says the author of *Wau-Bun*, from which these particulars are gathered. The Kinzie family hurried to the river side and, by means of two old pirogues, or dugouts, that were kept moored near the house, made all possible haste across the river and took refuge in the fort.

We can but faintly realize what a consuming terror seized upon the pioneers when the cry was heard that hostile Indians were coming. Often the alarm and the attack were simultaneous, for however quick and resourceful the whites might be, the savages were superior to them in one respect at least: their stealthy advance and cat-like spring upon their foes usually gave them the advantage at the beginning, which was followed by brutal ferocity and unsparing cruelty in the treatment of their victims.

It was no wonder that Mrs. Kinzie was terrified at the mention of the approach of hostile Indians. In her childhood, as previously related, she had been stolen by a tribe of Seneca

THE STORY OF

Indians in New York State and had lived among them for four years. She knew Indian ways in peace and warfare, and she knew that now at any moment the war-whoop might be heard and the savages be upon them. Not until she had crossed the threshold of the fort gates with her family about her could she feel a sensation of even temporary security.

After the fugitives from Lee's place had reached the fort and related their adventures the order was given to fire the alarm gun for the purpose of giving notice to any who were at a distance from the fort, and especially to the boat party, who were far up the South Branch of the river, that danger was impending.

Energetic measures were at once taken to secure the safety of the helpless Mrs. Burns and her infant. It was the gallant young Ensign Ronan who volunteered for this duty and, with five or six others who joined him, navigated an old scow up the river to the Burns house, took the mother and her infant child, together with the mattress upon which

OLD FORT DEARBORN

they lay, placed them on the scow, and soon had them within the walls of the fort, where they were tenderly cared for, and where all gathered felt perfectly safe.

The anxiety felt by all regarding the safety of the still absent boat party was at length relieved by its appearance at a late hour. Their tale was soon told, confirming and amplifying the alarming details related by the fugitives who had so narrowly escaped with their own lives.

On the morning following the events just narrated a party of volunteers made up of soldiers and civilians went up the river to Lee's place. There they found the bodies of Liberty White and the Frenchman Debou pierced with many wounds, the former having received the two shots heard by the fugitives, and the latter bearing the marks of numerous knife thrusts. The scalps of the murdered men had been taken by the Indians. The scalping process, which was practised by all the tribes of American Indians, has always added an element of horror to the outrages committed by them. The bodies of the mur-

THE STORY OF

dered men were brought to the fort and buried in its immediate vicinity.

The few inhabitants of the place living outside the fort, consisting of discharged soldiers and half-breeds, now took measures to defend themselves against a possible attack from the Indians, which they fully expected to follow. They planked up the long piazzas of the Agency House, which stood a short distance west of the fort on the bank of the river, and cut loopholes through the planks for use of musketry. Greater watchfulness was exercised by the garrison, and every preparation was made to resist attack.

It was afterward learned through traders out in the Indian country that the perpetrators of this bloody deed were a band of Winnebago Indians who came into this neighborhood to "take some white scalps." Their plan had been to massacre all the men at the farm and then proceed down the river and kill every white man who could be found outside the walls of the fort. This plan they had partially carried out as we have seen, but hearing the sound of the cannon fired at the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

fort, which they knew would alarm all the whites of the neighborhood, and having no further hope of coming upon them by surprise, they thought it best to remain satisfied with what they had already accomplished, and hastily returned to their villages on Rock River.

The tragedy at Lee's place was no doubt the result of the hostility awakened among the Indians of the western country by the malign influence of Tecumseh communicated through the various tribes of the Wabash Indians, among whom he was regarded as the champion of Indian rights. The battle of Tippecanoe, which had apparently crushed his power, was fought in the previous September; but he had renewed his activity from the safe shelter of the British dominions in Canada, where he had taken refuge, and as it was plain to all observers at this time that war between England and the United States was inevitable, the friendship of that chief was regarded as desirable by the former. Indeed, he and his tribesmen became an integral part of the British forces.

THE STORY OF

But as the days and weeks passed by, and the friendly Indians of the neighborhood explained that the attacking party at Lee's place were Winnebagoes, with whose hostility they had no sympathy, the tension of feeling was gradually relieved and more dependence came to be placed on the peaceable disposition of the Potawatamis. The vigilance of the garrison was relaxed, as it seemed to all that no further outbreak was likely to occur. The whites became convinced at length that no connection existed between the Winnebagoes concerned in the attack at Lee's place and the other tribes in the vicinity, and that no concert of action was apparent between the different tribes. Thus the memory of the bloody deed was permitted to slumber, and no serious attempt was made to bring the perpetrators to account. In fact, the feeling of unrest among the savages in general throughout the country was such that it seemed the part of wisdom to postpone any schemes of reprisal or punishment that the whites might have entertained until the times were more propitious. The excitement and fear which

OLD FORT DEARBORN

such an outrage usually inspired among the people of the frontiers wore off by degrees, and the ordinary activities of life were resumed.

Thus for a year or more there had been intermittent alarms of Indian attacks and outrages before the final catastrophe. Besides the murders committed in this region and in other parts of the western country, the horses and cattle of settlers had been stolen. On one occasion, when marauders failed to find horses in the stable near the fort, they wantonly killed a number of sheep found on the premises.

A significant incident occurred within the walls of the fort a few months preceding its destruction. It is related that two Indians from a northern tribe had been admitted to the fort as visitors. They noticed Mrs. Heald and Mrs. Helm playing at battledore on the parade ground opposite the officers' quarters. One of the Indians turned to the interpreter and said: "The white chiefs' wives are amusing themselves very much; it will not be long before they are hoeing in our cornfields!"

THE STORY OF

Not much importance was attached to the remark at the time but it was afterward bitterly remembered.

The following is a brief summary of the important national events which occurred during the years from 1803 to 1812, concurrent with and of especial interest to this narrative.

The Louisiana Purchase, consummated on April 30, 1803, added a vast extent of territory to the American possessions beyond the Mississippi, and greatly increased the responsibilities of the general Government. The public men of that day but faintly realized the consequences that would follow the immense addition to the territories of the United States thus brought about, though with characteristic energy and good sense they set about the task of developing the new domain.

"The winning of Louisiana," says Roosevelt, in his *Winning of the West*, "followed inevitably upon the great westward thrust of the settlerfolk, a thrust which was delivered blindly, but which no rival race could parry, until it was stopped by the ocean itself."

OLD FORT DEARBORN

The entire area of what is now the State of Illinois was, in 1803, a part of Indiana Territory, which had been organized three years before, with William Henry Harrison, then a young man of twenty-seven, as first Governor. It was not until February, 1809, that Illinois Territory was organized, with Ninian Edwards as the first Governor. No civil government was in existence at Chicago; the first authority, as at all frontier posts, was military. The only people here during the period of which we are writing, besides the few traders we have mentioned and their helpers, were the officers and soldiers of Fort Dearborn, and they were of course under military authority and discipline. All orders came to the captain commanding at the fort through the commandant at Detroit, Colonel Jacob Kingsbury, until the breaking out of the war with England, when General William Hull, previously the Governor of Michigan Territory, was placed in command of the Northwestern army then assembling at Detroit. Orders thenceforth issued from the commanding general.

THE STORY OF

The southern portion of the territory now within the bounds of the State of Illinois had been settled in some few localities during the French period of domination, and the population of the towns of Kaskaskia, Prairie du Rocher and Cahokia were predominantly French, being composed of a few native born French, but mostly of French Canadians and Creoles.

Even under British domination (1763 to 1783) there were practically no English-speaking people among the inhabitants of the places mentioned except the garrisons in the forts at those points; and after the conquering march of Colonel George Rogers Clark and his Virginians in 1778 and 1779 the English authority ceased altogether; the forces forming the garrisons having become prisoners in the hands of the Americans. The result of the stream of emigration that set in from Kentucky and the States farther east, after the creation of the Northwest Territory in 1787, was that in a few years the Americans outnumbered the earlier inhabitants.

At the time Fort Dearborn was built almost

OLD FORT DEARBORN

the entire State of Illinois, as at present constituted, was included in a county called St. Clair County. ~~*~~ It was not until long after Illinois had become a State in the Union that county government began to be effective in any way in the affairs of the little community at Chicago; and indeed, it did not matter in the least to the inhabitants what the name of the county might be in which the place was situated. It is quite likely that no one there even knew that he was living within the limits of St. Clair County, which in any case was merely a geographical expression carrying no exercise of jurisdiction whatever.

Thomas Jefferson was President of the United States from 1801 to 1809; in the latter year he was succeeded by James Madison, who was President for the ensuing eight years.

III

The Tragedy

III

THE TRAGEDY

THE echoes of the Napoleonic wars raging throughout Europe during the period before and after our war with Great Britain were heard even in this far-away region of the western frontier. England and her continental allies were engaged in a gigantic struggle with France under Napoleon, then at the height of his power. For the purpose of crippling her adversary England issued, in 1807, her famous Orders in Council, which declared that the vessels of neutral nations were liable to seizure if engaged in trade with the enemy. Napoleon retaliated by issuing the equally famous Decrees of Berlin and Milan, which declared Great Britain to be in a state of blockade, and that all vessels bound to or from British ports were liable to capture.

To enforce the Orders in Council was a

THE STORY OF

comparatively easy task for the English navy, then as now the most powerful among the nations; and in consequence the ocean commerce of the Americans suffered severely, for at that time every ocean highway was thronged with the merchant ships of the United States. The interference with our commerce was greatly aggravated by the high-handed action of the English in forcibly taking away from our ships many of their seamen and pressing them into the service of the English navy. This grievance especially became so exasperating that the war spirit of the American people was aroused from one end of the land to the other.

But the protests of the Americans, though made to both England and France, were disregarded, and it was realized that war could not be avoided with one or the other of those nations. Indeed, the proposal was frequently made in the press and in Congress that the country ought to declare war against both powers in view of the outrages suffered by our people. "The insolence of the powerful belligerents toward the young republic of the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

United States was hard to endure," says Larned, though "the conduct of the French Government was more insulting, if possible, and more injurious, than that of Great Britain." But the American people, still inspired by the feelings inherited from the Revolutionary strife, seemed more incensed at the treatment they received from the English than from the French.

The sparse settlements of the West and the isolated posts on the frontier were confronted with a more serious and imminent menace to their safety than were the inhabitants of the older portions of the country on the Atlantic seaboard. They beheld the war cloud gathering, with a dreadful apprehension of the certainty that it would bring upon them a sanguinary conflict with the savages of the wilderness.

The increasingly hostile relations between the Americans and the Western tribes, extending over a period of some years previous to the time of which we are writing, was brought to a climax through the disturbing influence of Tecumseh; but at the battle of Tippecanoe in

THE STORY OF

the fall of 1811, where the savages met with disastrous defeat, it was thought that at length an era of peace on the frontier was about to follow. And this, no doubt, would have been the case had it not been for the activity of British agents along the Canada border.

It soon became manifest that Indian hostility was once more increasing, and it was generally regarded as due to the machinations of the British at Malden in Canada, where they gave welcome and shelter to the discontented chiefs and their followers who sought their protection. Forays and attacks, sporadic expeditions of the savages for purposes of plunder or the taking of the scalps of settlers, were continually reported throughout the years 1811 and 1812. One of the causes of war recited by President Madison in his message to Congress just previous to the declaration of war against England was the attacks of the savages upon the frontier settlements incited by British traders, "a warfare," said the President, "which is known to spare neither age nor sex, and distinguished by features peculiarly shocking to humanity."

OLD FORT DEARBORN

When at length the Indian tribes became assured that war between the English and the Americans was about to follow, it was readily seen that they would act for their own interests, and that they would be found opposed to the Americans. The sympathies of the tribes were plainly with the English by reason of the fact that the latter were more liberal in making presents to them than the Americans were. Every year the Indians gathered at Malden, opposite Detroit, to receive presents both useful and ornamental. Besides blankets and provisions, a large quantity of objects suitable for the adornment of their persons were distributed among them for the purpose, as it was alleged, of "stimulating trade."

Thus the Western Indians passed by the American trading posts at Chicago, St. Joseph and other stations, and traveled over the old Sauk Trail, which extended from the Mississippi at Rock Island around the southern shore of Lake Michigan, loaded with furs, which they sold to the English traders at Malden. In addition to the goods received in barter by them, they were shown many favors

THE STORY OF

by the English Government officials, and the friendship thus cultivated proved of immense value to the English when war broke out. In that war the Indians were generally found fighting on the side of their English friends.

Another cause of the hostility shown by the Indians toward the Americans was the constant irritation created in their minds after treaties had been concluded. These treaties, though formally agreed to by the chiefs representing their tribes, were often regarded by the Indians as without validity for one reason or another. Indeed, the Indians were not without grievances against the Americans, some real and others conjured up and distorted by wrong-headed leaders among them.

Added to this was the difficulty of restraining the squatter and the bushranger, who defied all treaties, trampled upon the rights of the Indians, and disregarded the treaty obligations of the Government. The frontiersman had scant consideration for the red man, whom he looked upon as his natural enemy and the principal obstacle to his safety and well-being. This feeling constituted a natural antagonism

OLD FORT DEARBORN

which was not allayed until the final removal of all the tribes to Government reservations many years later.

In the summer of the year 1812 the officers on duty at Fort Dearborn were Captain Nathan Heald, the commanding officer; Lieutenant Linai T. Helm, Ensign George Ronan and Surgeon Isaac van Voorhis. Captain Heald was at that time thirty-seven years old and the other three officers were all well under thirty; Ronan was the youngest of them all, having graduated from West Point only the year before.

The force composing the garrison consisted, according to Captain Heald's own account written a couple of months afterward, of sixty-six enlisted men, fifty-four of whom were regulars, and twelve militia. In addition to these there were nine women and eighteen children. This makes a total, including the officers, of ninety-seven persons. Some accounts, however, give a different enumeration, but we shall make no attempt to reconcile them, as the variations are not many.

The news that the United States had de-

THE STORY OF

clared war against Great Britain was received at Fort Dearborn on the seventh day of August, 1812. This was fifty days afterwards, and it had taken this long time for the news to reach the remote post on the frontier. The authorities at Detroit, however, had been informed some three or four weeks before the messenger was finally despatched to Fort Dearborn. If word had been sent as soon as received at Detroit, there is no reasonable doubt that timely measures might have been taken to prevent the terrible disaster which followed. The despatches containing this important announcement were brought by a chief of the Potawatami tribe named Winnemeg, also called Winamac, who was friendly to the Americans and sent by General Hull to Captain Heald.

General William Hull, then in command of the Northwestern army assembled at Detroit, had served with distinction in the Revolutionary War, and had rendered excellent service as Governor of the Territory during the previous seven years. Until he surrendered Detroit he was held in high esteem

Received July 27th 1886
 J. P. H. Head

It is well as you
and the evacuation of some Port
being - the want of provisions only
a neglect of the Commandant, the
~~that~~ - You will therefore only
all goods & ammunition but the goods
of the fleet - You are given to the friendly
Indians who may be desirous of getting
You are to Port Weymouth is the Port
I need of your Port - I am informed
this day that Mohicans & their Island
of St Johns will be evacuated &
and in the interests of Port Weymouth
I have in my mind to give you an
account of the evacuation of the Port
of Malden - as I expect some more
to be the beginning of the war.

OLD FORT DEARBORN

and possessed the confidence of the administration.

A letter of instructions to Captain Heald from General Hull was the most important among the despatches brought by the messenger. This letter gave specific directions to the officer commanding at Fort Dearborn, and was as follows:

It is with regret I order the evacuation of your post, owing to the want of provisions only, a neglect of the Commandant of Detroit. You will therefore destroy all arms and ammunition; but the goods of the Factory you may give to the friendly Indians who may be desirous of escorting you on to Fort Wayne, and to the poor and needy of your post. I am informed this day that Mackinac and the Island of St. Joseph's [in the St. Mary's River] will be evacuated on account of the scarcity of provisions, and I hope in my next to give you an account of the surrender of the British at Malden, as I expect 600 men here by the beginning of Sept. [Signed] BRIGADIER GEN. HULL.

The letter, the original of which is preserved in the Draper collection of manuscripts at Madison, Wisconsin, bears the marks of having been hastily written. Evidently Mrs. John H. Kinzie, when she wrote the first published accounts of the events here nar-

THE STORY OF

rated, had never seen the letter in which is contained the order to evacuate. In her work entitled *Wau-Bun* she says that the order received by Captain Heald from General Hull was "to evacuate the fort, if practicable; and in that event, to distribute all the United States property contained in the fort and in the United States' Factory or agency among the Indians in the neighborhood."

Mrs. Kinzie's account of the order was doubtless gathered from those who were participants in the affairs of that time and who gave the contents of General Hull's letter from memory. For it must be remembered that the author of *Wau-Bun*, in which was printed the first authentic account of these events, was not a participant in them. She was the wife of John H. Kinzie, the son of John Kinzie the pioneer of 1804, and she did not come to Chicago until 1833, twenty-one years after the occurrences of which we are writing.

The original letter has come to light only within the last few years; and upon making a comparison with the *Wau-Bun* account it is seen that General Hull ordered the evacua-

OLD FORT DEARBORN

tion, without leaving anything whatever to the discretion of the officer to whom the order is addressed, though discretionary permission is implied by the conditional clause "if practicable" in the *Wau-Bun* account. Just how far Captain Heald would have been justified in using his discretion and disregarding the order to evacuate in view of the great danger there was in obeying it, is a question upon which there were opposing views then, and regarding which there has since been much controversy. It is plain, however, that a strict construction of the order would have required that the post be evacuated, no matter how serious the consequences of doing so might be; and judging from what we know of Captain Heald's character, it is not at all strange that he interpreted his orders literally.

The difficulties with which Captain Heald was encompassed can be but dimly realized. Far removed, as he was, from the nearest post; surrounded by hordes of savages who, though professing friendship, were without doubt in sympathy with the enemy, he well knew that whatever course he might adopt

THE STORY OF

would endanger the safety of the people under his care. His orders to evacuate were indeed positive; but if he could have been assured of safety by remaining and holding the post, he would have been justified without doubt in doing so; and it was the unanimous opinion of his advisers, including the officers of the garrison, that this should be done.

Captain Heald's problem, however, was a military one; he believed in obeying orders, on the theory that his superiors issued them as a part of a comprehensive plan. If he should remain at the post in defiance of his plain instructions he might embarrass a well-planned campaign and invite disaster in a larger field than he could be aware of. Thus, he decided (for though slow in his judgments, he was a man of much decision of character) that the evacuation must be made, and the many appalling risks of a retreat through the wilderness must be hazarded.

After his arrival with the despatches, the friendly Winnemeg sought out and conferred with John Kinzie, in whom the Indians generally placed much confidence. Kinzie was

OLD FORT DEARBORN

widely known as "the Indians' friend," and the regard felt by the savages of the neighborhood toward him and his family had heretofore been a powerful influence in protecting the post from their attacks. As it was, many of the young men of the tribes could scarcely be restrained in their desire to inaugurate hostilities in spite of their older men, who not only entertained a high regard for Kinzie and his family, but who also realized that the friendship of the Americans was of more value to them than that of the British.

Mr. Kinzie had taken up his residence at the fort and was soon in possession of all the material facts contained in Winnemeg's despatches. Winnemeg, well knowing the temper of the tribes, advised Mr. Kinzie that it would be dangerous to evacuate the post and attempt to pass through a country infested with hostile Indians. The garrison, he said, was well supplied with provisions and means of defence, and the post could withstand a siege until reinforcements arrived. But should Captain Heald decide upon abandoning the post according to his instructions, it

THE STORY OF

ought to be done immediately by all means, before the tribes had become aware of the actual condition of affairs.

All this was promptly communicated to the commandant, but it had little effect upon him, and he expressed his determination to carry out his instructions to the letter, distribute the supplies to the friendly Indians, and evacuate the post. Mr. Kinzie strongly reinforced the advice given by Winnemeg, but without effect, and on the following morning the order received from General Hull was read to the troops on parade.

Five days after the receipt of General Hull's order Captain Heald called a council of the Indians, who were then assembled in considerable numbers in the vicinity of the fort, to acquaint them with his intentions and request of them an escort for the garrison on its march to Fort Wayne.

Rumors of the state of affairs at the fort had already been spread among the Indians, and there were evidences of considerable excitement in their actions and conduct. Some of the savages entered the fort in defiance of the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

guards and making their way to the officers' quarters strode rudely around the living apartments. On one occasion an Indian went into the parlor of the commanding officer and, seizing a rifle, fired it, as an expression of defiance—so it was thought, though some believed it was the signal for an attack. "The old chiefs passed backwards and forwards among the assembled groups," says the *Waubun* account, "with the appearance of the most lively agitation, while the squaws rushed to and fro in great excitement, and evidently prepared for some fearful scene."

Notwithstanding these demonstrations, the commanding officer, in a perhaps mistaken endeavor to avoid any appearance of fear or hesitation, attended the council which he had called, though warned against doing so. This council was held on the esplanade adjoining the fort. He was accompanied only by Mr. Kinzie, the officers declining to participate. The officers had been secretly informed, they asserted, that the young men of the tribes intended to fall upon them when they attended the council and treacherously murder them,

THE STORY OF

but Captain Heald was not convinced that there was any truth in the information.

After the two passed out of the fort gates, the portholes of the blockhouses were opened and the cannons were pointed so as to command the whole assembly. This precaution no doubt saved the lives of the two white men who attended the council. Captain Heald informed the assembled Indians that he proposed to evacuate the fort, but before doing so it was his intention "to distribute among them, the next day, not only the goods lodged in the United States' Factory, but also the ammunition and provisions, with which the garrison was well supplied."

Following this statement he asked the Potawatamis to furnish him an escort for his troops on their march to Fort Wayne, promising that a liberal reward would be paid to them on their arrival, in addition to the presents he was then about to distribute. This proposal, apparently, was well received, and, "with many professions of friendship and good will, the savages assented to all he proposed, and promised all he required."

OLD FORT DEARBORN

But Mr. Kinzie, well knowing the disposition of the Indians, did not place reliance upon the assurance they had given. After the council he had an interview with Captain Heald and earnestly tried to convince him of the utter worthlessness of the promises made by the Indians. He reminded him of the many instances of hostility shown by them during the past year, especially by the Wabash Indians, with whom the Potawatamis were closely associated; and that it had become the settled policy of the Americans to withhold from the savages whatever would aid them in carrying on warfare against the scattered white inhabitants of the frontier; and that the distributions he was now making would directly assist them in their bloody purposes.

Owing to the representations thus made, Captain Heald at length became convinced that it would be dangerous to place in the hands of those who might at any moment become enemies the ammunition he had intended giving to them, and he determined to destroy all except what was necessary for the use of his own troops.

THE STORY OF

A letter written by Lieutenant Helm some two years afterwards has recently come to light. In this letter is given the amount of supplies and war material at the fort when the order to evacuate was received. "We had," says Helm, "two hundred stand of arms, four pieces of artillery, six thousand pounds of powder, and a sufficient quantity of shot, lead, etc. There was a supply of Indian corn and provisions to last three months, exclusive of a herd of two hundred head of horned cattle, and twenty-seven barrels of salt."

The next day after the council was held, the thirteenth, there was a general distribution of blankets, broadcloths, calicoes, paints, etc., among the Indians of the neighborhood; but in the evening the ammunition was thrown into a well and the liquors emptied into the river. The Indians, who were particularly eager for the ammunition and the liquors, had observed that neither of these articles was forthcoming in the distribution of the day, and under cover of darkness crept as near to the fort as possible in order to ascertain if

OLD FORT DEARBORN

any attempt was being made to destroy them, as they strongly suspected there would be. A guard had been placed, however, so that the Indians could not approach close to the scene. But though the prowling savages may not have actually witnessed the proceedings, the work of destruction was accomplished. The Indians were well convinced that all this had been done, especially as the river was so impregnated with the liquors that its waters had the taste of strong grog for some time afterward. All the weapons of warfare not necessary for the use of the soldiers were broken up and thrown into the well, along with quantities of powder, shot, flints and gunscrews.

The eight days intervening between the arrival of the order to evacuate the fort and the actual departure of the garrison were filled with forebodings and anxiety. The inmates of the fort, which now included not only the garrison but the civilian inhabitants of the neighborhood as well, believed that an appalling fate—death at the hands of a savage foe—inevitably awaited them. The one exception was Captain Heald, who still had faith that

THE STORY OF

the Indians would be true to their promise and furnish an escort on the "march through." He was convinced that he had succeeded in creating an amicable feeling among the savages, and that the safety of all was assured.

The officers of the garrison, finding that Captain Heald failed to call a council with them and that he had expressed an intention of abandoning the fort and proceeding to Fort Wayne with an Indian escort, drew up and presented a remonstrance to him in which it was recited that it was highly improbable that the command would be permitted to pass through the country in safety to Fort Wayne. For although it had been said that some of the chiefs had opposed an attack upon the fort, planned the preceding autumn, yet it was well known that they had been actuated in that matter by motives of private regard to one family, that of Mr. Kinzie, and not to any general friendly feeling toward the Americans; and that at any rate it was hardly to be expected that these few individuals would be able to control the whole tribe, who were thirsting for blood.

OLD FORT DEARBORN

In another clause of the remonstrance it was added that the march of the troops must be necessarily slow, as their movements must be accommodated to the helplessness of the women and children, of whom there were a number with the detachment; and that their unanimous advice was to remain where they were and fortify themselves as strongly as possible.

The reply made by Captain Heald to the remonstrance was that his force was totally inadequate to an engagement with the Indians;—that is, in withstanding a siege;—that he should unquestionably be censured for remaining when there appeared a prospect of a safe march through; that, upon the whole, he deemed it expedient to assemble the Indians, distribute the property among them, and then ask of them an escort to Fort Wayne, with the promise of a considerable reward upon their safe arrival;—and that he had “full confidence in the friendly professions of the Indians.”

The gathering perils that now environed the fort and its inmates were rapidly ap-

THE STORY OF

proaching a climax. A fatal mistake had been made in disregarding Winnemeg's advice to begin the retreat without delay if that course was determined upon. Winnemeg had advised that in such an event everything about the fort should be left standing as it was, and while the Indians were engaged in plundering the abandoned fort the troops might be well on their way to Fort Wayne, and perhaps escape attack altogether. John Kinzie likewise strongly urged the necessity of prompt action if the movement was to be made at all.

The officers held aloof from Captain Heald after the distribution of the supplies had taken place, convinced at length that further efforts to dissuade him from his course were useless. They denounced his purpose as "little short of madness." There were many evidences of insubordination observed among the soldiers, and an atmosphere of gloom pervaded the minds of all in the fort.

On the fourteenth, the day before that decided upon for the evacuation, the general despondency was relieved by the arrival of

OLD FORT DEARBORN

Captain William Wells from Fort Wayne at the head of a band of about thirty friendly Indians of the Miami tribe mounted on ponies. Captain Wells will always be classed among the heroic figures of the time. He was then in the prime of life, a man about forty years of age, and known throughout the frontier as a "perfect master of everything pertaining to Indian life both in peace and war, and withal a stranger to personal fear."

When General Hull had sent the order to Captain Heald to evacuate his post, he also sent an express to Major B. F. Stickney, Indian agent at Fort Wayne, advising him of the order and requesting him to render to Captain Heald all the information and assistance in his power to give. In accordance with this request, Major Stickney had promptly despatched Captain Wells with a party of Miami warriors. A warm attachment existed between Wells and Heald, and upon the arrival of Wells with his Miamis he was hailed with joy, and the hopes of the people at the fort were revived.

It was Wells's intention to prevent if pos-

THE STORY OF

sible the abandonment of the fort, aware as he was of the hostility of the Potawatamis, for he knew that certain destruction awaited the garrison if it should make the attempt. Possessing a perfect knowledge of the character and disposition of the Indians, derived from his long residence among them, Wells foresaw that the savages would take quick advantage of the whites should they leave the shelter of the fort walls and expose themselves in the open on their long slow march of a hundred and fifty miles to Fort Wayne.

When Wells reached the fort he found to his dismay that most of the ammunition had been destroyed, and that the provisions, blankets and other goods in the factory had been distributed to the Indians. He perceived at once that the means of defence having been so seriously reduced there was now no other course to pursue, and that the march must be attempted.

During the day another council with the Indians was held, and on this occasion the savages were found to be in an angry mood. They immediately reminded the commanding

OLD FORT DEARBORN

officer that they were aware of the destruction of the ammunition and the liquors and that they regarded it as an act of bad faith. It was with the utmost difficulty that the chiefs could restrain the young men of the tribe from carrying out their sanguinary designs at once. For although there were several of the chiefs who shared the generally hostile feeling of the tribe toward the whites, yet they entertained a regard for the men of the garrison and the traders of the neighborhood.

The evening of the last day at the fort, Black Partridge, a prominent chief of the Potawatamis, of whom further mention will be made, came to the officers' quarters and addressed Captain Heald as follows: "Father, I come to deliver up to you the medal I wear. It was given me by the Americans, and I have long worn it in token of our mutual friendship. But our young men are resolved to imbrue their hands in the blood of the whites. I cannot restrain them, and I will not wear a token of peace while I am compelled to act as an enemy."

The language of this speech cannot, of

THE STORY OF

course, be accepted as the verbatim utterance of Black Partridge. He spoke in his own tongue, and the speech was translated by the interpreter, who at that time was John Kinzie. The utterance has, however, become a classic in all the historical accounts pertaining to the events of that time.

An observer taking a survey from the walls of the fort at this time would have beheld the river to the north flowing in a sluggish current toward the lake, then bending to the south until it reached its mouth over a shallow bottom nearly opposite the present Madison Street. On the bank of the river, near its mouth, stood the house of Charles Lee, the owner of "Lee's Place," the farm some four miles up the South Branch where two men were murdered by the Indians in the previous April. Toward the west was the Agency House, standing near the bank of the river, beyond which were the groups of Indian wigwams clustered along the creek that formerly flowed into the main stream at the present State Street. Opposite this point, on the north bank, was the house of John Burns;

OLD FORT DEARBORN

and further eastward was the most pretentious residence of the place, the house of John Kinzie. A little in the rear of it stood the cabin of Antoine Ouilmette.

Taking a more distant view toward the west, the observer might have seen the point where the North and South branches of the river met and formed the main body of the stream. The north banks of the river were wooded to the water's edge except where clearings had been made around the cabins mentioned.

Looking eastward, the broad expanse of Lake Michigan stretched away beyond the limits of vision. At the season of year in which the events of which we are writing took place the lake was usually devoid of storms and rough weather.

Lake Michigan at this point has a breadth of fifty miles between the mouth of the Chicago River and the opposite or Michigan shore; and there being no eminence of sufficient height to rise above the horizon, the prospect was like looking off to sea where there is an offing of thousands of miles.

THE STORY OF

Northward the shores were fringed with a white oak forest, with a line of sand-hills near the beach. Looking southward, the shore of the lake trended away in a curve toward the southeast, and on its margin could be traced the sand-hills characteristic of the shores as far as the eye could reach.

It is a remarkable fact that most of the details of the Chicago massacre are derived from the accounts furnished by the two women who were eye-witnesses of the scenes described. Neither of these accounts was directly written by the two women referred to, but are preserved through secondary reports.

The narrative of Mrs. Helm, who was only seventeen years old at the time, was taken down from dictation apparently by Mrs. John H. Kinzie and incorporated in *Wau-Bun*. While this account, as given in the work mentioned, is enclosed in quotation-marks as if in the language of the narrator, it was evidently rendered by Mrs. Kinzie in her own words. Mrs. Kinzie was not present at the massacre, not having come to Chicago until twenty

OLD FORT DEARBORN

years thereafter, but she was diligent in procuring all the information available at the time of writing her book. In her later years she no doubt talked the matter over at length with Mrs. Helm, who was a half-sister of her husband.

It is important, in obtaining a clear understanding of this narrative, that the names of Mrs. John Kinzie, the wife of the pioneer of 1804, and of Mrs. John H. Kinzie, the author, be not confused.

The narrative of Mrs. Heald reaches posterity through the story of her son, Darius Heald. A portion was given in John Wentworth's address at the unveiling of the memorial tablet on the site of old Fort Dearborn, delivered May 21, 1881; and another portion is quoted in Joseph Kirkland's book, *The Chicago Massacre*, published some years later.

Darius Heald was not born until ten years after the massacre, and his testimony, written from his dictation, was derived entirely from the oral account of his mother.

Comparing the account with that given by

THE STORY OF

Mrs. Helm a number of discrepancies in details is observed, though the main events are related in both accounts in practically identical form.

The accounts of both Mrs. Helm and Mrs. Heald were written from dictation. Mrs. Helm's account appeared in print twenty-four years after the event which it describes, while Mrs. Heald's did not appear until seventy-five years thereafter, having in the meantime been preserved only in the form of a family tradition. It can therefore hardly have as much historical value as the older published narrative of Mrs. Helm.

The morning of the fifteenth of August, 1812, dawned clear and the day was oppressively warm. There was scarcely a breath of air stirring and the surface of the lake was unruffled, stretching away, as one expressed it, "like a sheet of burnished gold." The preparations for the departure went actively forward. At nine o'clock Captain Wells took a place at the head of the column on horseback, his face blackened, according to the Indian custom, "in token of his impending fate."

OLD FORT DEARBORN

Wells was under no illusions. He knew that at any moment the crisis would be upon them, and he clearly realized how hopeless in the presence of hordes of savages in the neighborhood, bent on blood and plunder, any resistance would be, and how faint a chance there was for escape. But brave and resolute he calmly went forward with the fixed purpose of doing his duty in the face of inevitable destruction.

Following him rode half of his Miami band, and behind them the musicians came, and as the march began they played the Dead March. Then came the soldiers, each carrying twenty-five rounds of ammunition, all that had been reserved from the general destruction, though a totally inadequate supply for such a campaign as they might reasonably look forward to in these threatening circumstances.

Next came a train of wagons in which the camp equipage and provisions were carried, and in the wagons were also placed the women and children. The rear of the column was brought up by the remainder of the

THE STORY OF

Miami escort. The wives of the married officers, Mrs. Heald and Mrs. Helm, accompanied the procession on horseback.

The escort promised by the Potawatamis in council was on hand and moved with the procession, a few hundred yards to the west, keeping a parallel course. There was a lingering hope among the whites that the Indians would be true to their promise and continue with them throughout their journey as a protecting force, and in this hope the movements of the Indians were watched with the greatest interest, though with painful forebodings and suspicions.

Among the people thus hoping against hope "there were not wanting gallant hearts who strove to encourage in their desponding companions the hopes of escape they were far from indulging themselves."

Early in the morning of the day of the departure of the garrison John Kinzie had received a message from Topenebe of St. Joseph's band informing him of what he already was well convinced of, that the Potawatamis who were to act as escort on the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

march had treacherous designs, and would without doubt attack the column. Topenebe was a chief in the Potawatami tribe, but a firm friend of the whites and especially of the Kinzie family. He warned Mr. Kinzie not to accompany the troops when they left the fort, but rather to take passage in a boat with his family and proceed directly to St. Joseph, where he might rejoin the troops if they were successful in passing through the country.

Mr. Kinzie, however, decided to place his family in the boat, while he himself accompanied the troops, in the hope and belief that his presence would operate as a restraint upon the fury of the savages in case of an attack. This brave action on the part of Mr. Kinzie, who thus cast in his lot with those who were going forth to almost certain destruction, must be regarded as an exhibition of rare personal courage notable even among many other instances of a similar kind seen on that fatal day.

The party in the boat which left the Kinzie house about the same time that the troops marched out of the fort consisted of Mrs. Kin-

THE STORY OF

zie and her four children, the eldest of whom by her second marriage was John Harris, then nine years old. The others were: Ellen Marion, six and a half years old; Maria Indiana, four years old, and Robert Allen, two and a half years old. In addition there were Josette La Framboise, a French-Ottawa half-breed, a nurse in the family; Chandonnais, a clerk in the employ of Mr. Kinzie; two servants, a boatman, and the two Indians who had brought the message from Topenebe. This made a party of twelve persons in the boat.

Upon Mrs. Kinzie now devolved the responsibility and direction of the party in the boat, since her husband had chosen to accompany the troops. Proceeding to the mouth of the river, the boat was detained for a time while the party beheld the passage of the column just beginning its march. Mrs. Kinzie "was a woman of uncommon energy and strength of character," says the author of *Wau-Bun*, "yet her heart died within her as she folded her arms around her helpless infants, and gazed upon the march of her hus-

OLD FORT DEARBORN

band and eldest child to certain destruction." It will be recalled that Mrs. Kinzie's eldest child was Mrs. Margaret Helm, who was with her husband on the march.

Antoine Ouilmette and his family did not abandon their dwelling as did all the other residents of the village. A sister of his wife, known in the accounts as Mrs. Bisson, was a member of this same household. Ouilmette was regarded by the Potawatamis as belonging to their tribe, and he felt no apprehension of danger in remaining on the ground. Renegade whites living among the savages usually maintained their standing among them by offering no opposition to any atrocities committed by them, and sometimes even participating in the warfare against their own race.

The line of march lay along the shore of the lake toward the south. In the absence of roads through the country at that early period the traveling was difficult for wagons, and the margin of the lake was usually preferred for that kind of locomotion wherever it lay in the desired direction. For a considerable distance toward the southern end of the

THE STORY OF

lake the route of the proposed march would be along the sandy beach, usually firm and smooth near the water's edge.

Boat navigation was the main reliance for transporting men and goods, though as yet there was not a sufficiently large number of boats of any description on Lake Michigan to have moved so large a body of men and women at one time as composed the procession leaving the fort. And even if there had been enough of such as were used by the traders, it is not likely that the people would have been permitted by the hostile Indians even to embark in them.

The fort was no sooner vacated than the Indians rushed in and began to plunder the place of everything that was movable. In an adjoining field there had been a herd of cattle kept for the use of soldiers, such as milch cows, oxen, etc., and these were allowed to run at large when the troops departed. The Indians gave chase and shot them all, seemingly for the satisfaction they found in the mere act of killing, and the deed was quite in keeping with their usual im-

OLD FORT DEARBORN

provident habits. Mrs. Helm, in her account, said that she well remembered a remark of Ensign Ronan as the shooting of the cattle went on. "Such," said he, "is to be our fate, — to be shot down like beasts."

In taking their departure from the fort there was little in the conduct of the savages to indicate the hostility which was so soon to manifest itself. Mrs. Heald gave an account of the scene many years later, and she said in her narrative that "the fort was vacated quietly, not a cross word being passed between soldiers and Indians, and good-byes were exchanged."

In fact, it was generally believed that those Indians who gathered about the entrance of the fort, prepared to rush in the moment the last men passed out, took no part in the later events of the day, being fully occupied in their work of plundering and cattle-killing. John Wentworth in one of his lectures on the subject went further, and declared that the Indians who had lived a long time in the immediate vicinity of the fort were friendly to the whites and "did their best to pacify

THE STORY OF

the numerous warriors who flocked here from the more distant hunting grounds."

The column had not proceeded very far on its course before it was noticed that the Potawatami escort was diverging from the direction in which both columns started out and that at the distance of a mile from the fort there was a considerable distance between them.

A range of sand-hills and sand-banks of no great height skirted the shore dividing the sandy beach from the prairie beyond them. Among these sand-hills were a few trees and bushes supporting a precarious existence. Westward of this range of sand-hills which began to rise about a mile from the fort the Indians continued their course and were soon lost to view.

Suddenly, far in the advance, Captain Wells was seen to turn his horse and ride furiously back along the marching men, who quickly came to a halt. Wells was swinging his hat in a circle around his head, which meant in the sign language of the frontier, "We are surrounded by Indians!" As he

OLD FORT DEARBORN

approached the commanding officer he shouted, "They are about to attack us; form instantly and charge upon them." The Potawatami escort had in fact become the attacking party, choosing to murder the whites rather than join in looting the fort.

The Indians could now be seen in great numbers coming into view from behind the mounds of sand, their heads bobbing up and down "like turtles out of the water." The troops were promptly formed and they had no sooner taken position than the Indians began firing upon them with deadly effect, the first victim being a veteran of seventy years of age.

After firing one round the troops charged up the slopes of the sand-hills, driving the Indians from the position. However, they scattered in both directions and presently began to envelop the flanks of the line according to the usual practice in savage warfare. At this juncture the mounted Miamis would have been of the greatest service in preventing such a manœuvre, but they had all fled across the prairie after the first shot was fired,

THE STORY OF

quickly disappeared in the distance, and were seen no more.

Captain Heald, in a letter written a few weeks after the event, said:

The situation of the country rendered it necessary for us to take the beach, with the lake on our left, and a high sand-bank on our right, at about one hundred yards' distance. We had proceeded about a mile and a half when it was discovered that the Indians were prepared to attack us from behind the bank. I immediately marched up with the company to the top of the bank when the action commenced; after firing one round we charged, and the Indians gave way in front and joined those on our flanks.

The horses upon which Mrs. Heald and Mrs. Helm were riding became almost unmanageable after the firing had begun. The explosion of a charge in an old flint lock musket was a terrific outburst of noise. It produced a volume of sound which we can scarcely realize when comparing it with the report of a service rifle in use at the present day. It was little wonder that the horses pranced and bounded when these thundering volleys were heard.

Mrs. Helm said that she drew off a little

OLD FORT DEARBORN

and gazing upon her husband (Lieutenant Helm) and her father (Mr. Kinzie), whom, although he was her step-father, she was always fond of calling father, she saw that they both were yet unharmed. But she felt that as for herself her hour had come, and she endeavored to forget those she loved, and to prepare herself for her approaching fate.

It was the endeavor of the savages to close upon their victims whenever they found an opportunity to bring their tomahawks and scalping knives into use. While some were firing upon the troops from cover, others were seeking to attack those who had become separated from their friends. These they could quickly overcome owing to their skill in the use of those murderous weapons.

One Sergeant Holt, who was accompanied by his wife, had received a ball in his neck in the early part of the engagement. He handed his sword to his wife, who was on horseback near him, and told her to defend herself. The Indians were desirous of obtaining possession of the horse and at the same time sparing her life, for generally they

THE STORY OF

wished to take the women captives. Mrs. Holt resisted vigorously when the savages attempted to seize the horse; she broke away from them and dashed out on the open prairie. Still pursuing, they overtook her and succeeded in dragging her from her horse. She was then made a prisoner and later taken to the Illinois River country, where she received kind treatment. Ultimately she was ransomed and restored to her friends.

Mrs. Helm was attacked by a young Indian, who raised his tomahawk, intending to deal her a blow, but she avoided the murderous weapon and seized her assailant around the neck. This is the moment that the sculptor of the bronze group, now situated at the intersection of Eighteenth Street and Calumet Avenue, chose for his representation. Mrs. Helm tried to get possession of the scalping knife which hung in a scabbard over his breast, but another and an older Indian dragged her away with a strong grasp. Struggling and resisting, she was then borne toward the lake, plunged into the water and



firmly held, as if it were the intention to drown her. She soon perceived, however, that the object of her captor was not to drown her, as he held her in such a position as to keep her head above water. She began to gather courage, and looking the savage full in the face, she saw at once, notwithstanding the paint with which he had disguised himself, that it was Black Partridge, the chief who had surrendered his medal to the commandant the evening before.

When the firing was nearly over, the chief brought her out of the water and placed her on a sand-bank. "It was a burning August morning," she said, "and walking through the sand in my drenched condition was inexpressibly painful and fatiguing. I stooped and took off my shoes to free them from the sand with which they were nearly filled, when a squaw seized them and carried them off, and I was obliged to proceed without them."

As she gained the prairie she was met by Mr. Kinzie, who informed her that her husband (Lieutenant Helm) was safe, and but

THE STORY OF

slightly wounded. She was led back to the Indian encampment on the banks of the Chicago River. "At one time," she continues in her story, "I was placed upon a horse without a saddle, but finding the motion insupportable, I sprang off. Supported partly by my kind conductor, Black Partridge, and partly by another Indian, Pee-so-tum, who held dangling in his hand a scalp, which by the black ribbon around the queue I recognized as that of Captain Wells, I dragged my fainting steps to one of the wigwams."

Arrived at the entrance of a chief's wigwam, the wife of the chief, inspired by a sentiment of pity for her, an exhibition of feeling rare among Indian women, seeing her exhausted condition, took a kettle and, dipping up some water from the small creek near by, threw in a quantity of maple sugar, and, stirring it with her hand, gave the mixture to her to drink. She was greatly refreshed by the draught. This act of kindness touched the poor young woman deeply, occurring as it did in the midst of so many horrors.

In the meantime the men in the ranks fell

OLD FORT DEARBORN

rapidly under the withering fire of their savage foes, who were now on all sides of them in overwhelming numbers. Still they continued the struggle bravely, and the prairie was soon thickly scattered with dead and wounded. Captain Heald himself received a wound in his hip, from which he suffered for the remainder of his life, and which caused his death some years later. It may be stated in passing that the bodies of those who were killed in this bloody combat lay exposed to the elements and wild beasts for four years, until eventually their remains were gathered up and buried by United States soldiers arriving to rebuild the fort.

The troops behaved most gallantly while the battle lasted and seemed determined to make as brave a defence as possible. They were soon reduced to about one-half of their original number. After the action had continued about a quarter of an hour Captain Heald drew off the few men still remaining and took possession of a small elevation in the open prairie, beyond the range of the shots coming from the sand-hills which the

THE STORY OF

Indians now held, thus having reversed the positions which the opposing forces occupied at the beginning of the battle.

There was nothing now to prevent the savages from attacking the wagons containing the women and children. The troops were isolated on the prairie and could not even defend themselves, much less could they do anything to protect the helpless people in the wagons.

Meantime Captain Wells was fighting, Indian fashion, and doing more execution than any other man on the field. Mounted on horseback, he freely exposed himself wherever the combat was most furious. He was armed with a rifle and carried two pistols. His powder and bullets were carried in belts slung over his shoulders, convenient for instant use. He usually had the bullet needed for the next load ready in his mouth. "He would pour in the powder," said an eye-witness, "wad it down, blow in the bullet, prime, and fire, more rapidly than one can tell the facts."

The savages had a wholesome fear of Wells, and they fled from his aim in all directions. They broke from him right and left. In the

effort to protect the women and children he closely watched the movements of the Indians toward the wagons, and presently saw a young savage come up and enter one of them in which twelve of the children had been collected. Before he could prevent him, the savage ruthlessly tomahawked the entire group; and when Wells caught sight of this horrid deed, he shouted in rage: "Is that their game—butchering women and children?"

But his own end was near. He received a shot which passed through his lungs, and realizing that it was a mortal wound, he rode up to his niece, Mrs. Heald, still maintaining his position upon his horse. Seizing her hand, he exclaimed, "Farewell, my child." Mrs. Heald, who, though thus addressed, was nearly as old as her uncle, replied, "Why, uncle, I hope you will get over this." "No, my child," he said, "I cannot." She then saw that blood was coming from his nose and mouth, and he said that he could not last five minutes longer. He then gave his niece his last message in these words: "Tell my wife, if you live to get there,—but I think it doubt-

THE STORY OF

ful if a single one gets there, — tell her I died at my post doing the best I could. There are seven red devils over there that I have killed.”

Wells's horse had already been shot through the body, and at that moment fell exhausted, with his rider pinioned beneath him. Wells then saw several Indians coming toward him, bent on taking advantage of his apparent helplessness. He summoned his failing strength and from his prostrate position took aim and killed one of them on the spot. The others approached closer to the wounded lion, determined to strike a blow or fire a shot that would instantly end his life. Mrs. Heald saw the movement and cried out, “Uncle, there is an Indian pointing right at the back of your head.” He put his hand back and held up his head, in spite of his failing strength, so that better aim might be taken, and then exclaimed, “Shoot away!”

The Indian fired and Captain Wells fell dead. Thus perished the man to whom in a greater degree than to any other person those who still remained alive upon the scene looked for help and guidance in this awful

OLD FORT DEARBORN

extremity. Without him, the thickening perils of the hour seemed the climax of despair.

Some time later the news of the death of Captain Wells reached his widow (the daughter of the chief Little Turtle), long before Mrs. Heald, who survived the massacre, was able to convey the message entrusted to her. One of the Indians present who witnessed the scene, though he took no part in the perpetration of that dark deed, was a friend of Wells, whom he had known in former years and whom he regarded as a brother. It was this Indian who went to Fort Wayne after the battle was over and gave Mrs. Wells the first intimation of her husband's death. After doing so he disappeared, and it was supposed that he returned to his tribe, as he was not seen again.

The two younger officers, Ensign George Ronan and Surgeon Isaac Van Voorhis, had been all this time gallantly bearing their part in the unequal struggle with the savage hordes that surrounded them, and both of them had received dangerous wounds. In her

THE STORY OF

account of the battle, Mrs. Helm says that, overwrought by his fighting and pain, the surgeon came up and addressed her. He had been wounded, his horse had been shot under him, and he was in a state of terror. Aware of Mrs. Helm's lifelong experience with the Indians, though she was much younger than himself, he said to her: "Do you think they will take our lives? I am badly wounded, but I think not mortally. Perhaps we might purchase our lives by promising them a large reward. Do you think there is any chance?"

"Dr. Van Voorhis," said the seventeen-year-old girl, "do not let us waste the few moments that yet remain to us in such vain hopes. Our fate is inevitable. In a few moments we must appear before the bar of God. Let us make what preparation is yet in our power."

"Oh, I cannot die!" he exclaimed. "I am not fit to die. If I had but a short time to prepare! Death is awful!" Mrs. Helm pointed to Ensign Ronan, who, though even then mortally wounded, was down on one

OLD FORT DEARBORN

knee and was still fighting with desperate courage.

"Look at that man," she said. "At least he dies like a soldier." "Yes," replied the surgeon, "but he has no terrors of the future—he is an unbeliever!"

The wounded surgeon's fear, thus shown under these trying circumstances, was entirely natural. He was then only twenty-two years of age and had entered the service on the frontier but the year before. The bravest men have often passed through a similar experience in moments of danger. An unbeliever, in his view, would not concern himself with the hereafter; but he considered that he himself was unfit to appear before the bar of God. What more natural than that this young man's heart should fail him in that supreme moment?

There was no opportunity, however, even had he been able, to show his mettle by a renewed effort to stem the tide of disaster, for almost immediately afterwards he was tomahawked by one of the Indians, and was seen dead on the ground when Mrs. Helm

THE STORY OF

passed that way a little time later as the captive of the chief Black Partridge, on their way to the river.

In an obituary notice, published in *The Political Index*, November 17, 1812, at Newburg, New York, there is the following notice of the unfortunate young surgeon: "Among the slain (at the Fort Dearborn Massacre) was Dr. Isaac Van Voorhis, of Fishkill, surgeon in the army. He was a young man of great merit, and received his early education at the academy in this village. He possessed an enterprising and cultivated mind, and was ardent in the support of the interest and honor of his country."

Ensign George Ronan, who was also only twenty-two, had entered the service on the frontier the previous year. He was a graduate of West Point, with the rank of ensign, corresponding to that of second lieutenant in the modern army regulations. He is always referred to as a brave and enterprising young officer. He won the admiration of all during the months previous to the events here narrated, and especially for the courage and devo-

tion shown by him in the last scene, when he perished on the field of battle.

From his position on the battle-field, Captain Heald saw the Indians making signs to him to approach and consult with them. Heald advanced alone in response to this invitation. Through a half-breed interpreter, Peresh Leclerc, he was asked to surrender to them, the Indians at the same time promising to spare the lives of all the prisoners. A Potawatami chief, named Black Bird, was the spokesman for the Indians. Captain Heald in his report says that after a few moments' consideration he concluded it would be most prudent to comply with this request, although he did not put entire confidence in the promise. In fact, Heald was reduced to extremities, and a parley with the Indians was his only hope. They were surrounded by the savages, Lieutenant Helm was wounded and a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, who indeed had possession of all the horses, wagons, and property of every description, besides having killed or captured all the women and children. He was obliged to

THE STORY OF

make the best terms possible, for though a surrender might be followed by treachery, there was really no other course for him to take.

The surrender was then agreed to and the fighting ceased. The air was filled with the shouts of the savages exulting over their victory, while from the wounded issued moans of pain, and from the distance could be heard the wailings of cruelly bereaved mothers.

After delivering up their arms, the survivors were taken back to the encampment of the Indians near the fort, and distributed among the different tribes. The number of their warriors, Heald said, was between four hundred and five hundred, mostly of the Potawatami nation, and the loss on their side was about fifteen. There were about sixty of the whites killed in the battle and the massacre which followed, but when the troops surrendered and the Indians promised that the lives of the survivors should be spared, it was found that the savages regarded the wounded as exempted from this condition. Accordingly, many of the wounded were

OLD FORT DEARBORN

ruthlessly tomahawked after the surrender, and in the same evening five of the soldiers were tortured to death. A number of others perished from the privations they suffered while in the hands of the Indians during the ensuing season.

The boat containing the Kinzie family and the servants accompanying them at first kept near the mouth of the river, the occupants watching the troops and the wagon train passing along the beach toward the south. They heard the discharge of the guns when the Indians attacked, and the boat's course was directed so as to approach as nearly as possible to the scene of the fighting. They saw a woman on horseback led by an Indian not far from the edge of the water.

"That is Mrs. Heald," cried Mrs. Kinzie. "That Indian will kill her. Run, Chandonnais, take the mule that is tied there and offer it to him to release her." The Indian was already attempting to take off her bonnet, with the evident intention of scalping her, and she was resisting vigorously.

The Indian paused long enough in the

THE STORY OF

struggle to listen to the offer made by Chandonnais, who added the promise of two bottles of whiskey as soon as they would reach their destination. "But," said the Indian, "she is badly wounded—she will die. Will you give me the whiskey at all events?" Chandonnais, who was well known to the Indians, promised that he would, and the bargain was concluded. Several squaws, keen for plunder, had followed the procession closely, and made an ineffectual attempt to rob Mrs. Heald of her shoes and stockings. The savage had succeeded in getting possession of her bonnet, and placed it on his own head. She was taken on board the boat, and lay moaning with pain from the wounds she had received.

As it was impossible to continue their journey under the circumstances, the boat and its passengers returned to the Kinzie house, trusting to the influence possessed by Mr. Kinzie to maintain their safety. They were joined there by Mr. Kinzie, who had escaped injury from the savages. Around them gathered a number of Indians still friendly to the Kinzie family, whose intentions were to assist them

OLD FORT DEARBORN

in a renewed attempt to reach their proposed destination at St. Joseph.

Among the friendly Indians thus gathered was Black Partridge, who had rescued Mrs. Helm and had safely brought her to the Kinzie house, where she rejoined her family.

Thus were assembled the entire family of John Kinzie, except his son-in-law, Lieutenant Helm. Mrs. Heald and Mrs. Helm were both suffering from wounds. Both had been attacked by the savages while on horseback, the former having perhaps escaped death, through the ransom negotiated by Chandonnais, and the other having been rescued by Black Partridge.

John Burns, with his wife and infant child, had lived in the house west of the Kinzies', on the north bank of the river, and were with the troops at the time of the attack. It will be recalled that Mrs. Burns and her one-day-old infant had been brought to the fort for safety at the time of the Indian alarm in the previous April. Burns was killed while with the troops, but his wife and child were made captives by one of the chiefs and by him taken

THE STORY OF

to his village and treated with great kindness; but his squaw wife, excited by feelings of jealousy of the favors shown to the captives, attempted to kill the child with a tomahawk thrown at it with great force. The blow narrowly missed being fatal, but it inflicted a wound the marks of which she carried through the remainder of her life. The chief prevented further attempts of the kind by removing the captives to a place of safety. Eventually the mother and child found their way back to civilization.

"Twenty-two years after this," writes the younger Mrs. Kinzie, in *Wau-Bun*, "as I was on a journey to Chicago in the steamer 'Uncle Sam,' a young woman, hearing my name, introduced herself to me, and raising the hair from her forehead, showed me the mark of the tomahawk which had so nearly been fatal to her."

A somewhat similar case was that of Mrs. Charles Lee, whose husband owned the farm on the South Branch where the two men were murdered by Indians in the previous April. His son, a lad of twelve years, who, with the

OLD FORT DEARBORN

discharged soldier, ran to the fort from the farm and gave the alarm on that occasion, was also with the troops in company with his father. Lee and his son were both killed in the battle, but Mrs. Lee and her young child were captured, and later came into the possession of Black Partridge. This "knightly rescuer of women" proved the worth of his friendship toward the whites in the case of Mrs. Lee and her child, as he had already done in the rescue of Mrs. Helm.

The story of John Cooper, surgeon's mate at Fort Dearborn, was similar in many of its details to that of others in the battle. Cooper was accompanied by his wife and two young daughters, the elder of whom was named Isabella. Cooper was among the killed, and when the Indians made a rush for the women and children in the wagons, a young Indian boy attempted to carry off Isabella, but encountered so lively a resistance that he was obliged to throw her down. He succeeded in scalping her, and would have killed her outright had not an old squaw prevented him. The squaw, who knew the Cooper fam-

THE STORY OF

ily, took Mrs. Cooper and her children to her wigwam and cured the girl of her wound.

The family remained in captivity two years, when they were ransomed. They afterwards lived in Detroit. The mark of the wound on the girl's head caused by the young Indian's scalping knife was about the size of a silver dollar, and, of course, remained with her through her life.

An infant of six months was with its mother among the survivors of that dreadful day. Corporal Simmons had with him on the march his wife and two children, the eldest a boy of two years, and a little girl an infant in its mother's arms. The mother and her children were in the army wagon, which was entered by the Indian, who despatched the children as rapidly as he could reach them. Mrs. Simmons, while not able to save her boy, succeeded in concealing the baby in a shawl behind her, and the child survived the scenes of that day. The corporal himself was among those who were slain.

When the division of prisoners took place after the action Mrs. Simmons was carried off

OLD FORT DEARBORN

by the Indians to Green Bay, the whole distance to which she walked, carrying her child in her arms. On arriving at their destination the captives were required to "run the gauntlet," according to the brutal custom of the savages, but in doing so she was able to protect her precious charge by bending over it as she held it in her arms. She received many cruel blows and half dead she reached the goal where a friendly squaw gave her and her child a kind reception. In the following year, after many weary wanderings, Mrs. Simmons reached a frontier post in Ohio and was at length set at liberty.

This child grew up and became the wife of Moses Winans, and in later life she and her husband lived in California, but she never returned to Chicago again. She died in 1903, at the advanced age of ninety years.

Of the nine women who set out with the troops, two were killed; the others, except Mrs. Heald and Mrs. Helm, were carried off by the savages, and some did not survive the hardships of the life they were compelled to undergo. There were eighteen children, of

THE STORY OF

whom twelve were killed outright, and but few of the others were ever heard of.

The following fall and winter the British, then in possession of Detroit, were urged by some of the American residents of that place to exert their influence among their Indian allies to return the captives to the custody of the British military authorities. Tardy efforts were made, and at length the agent who was appointed for that work reported that he had gathered at the St. Joseph River seventeen soldiers, four women, and some children. There were, however, several other survivors not included among those whom the British agent was able to find, as appears from some other accounts. The soldiers were taken to Detroit and became prisoners of war, but their condition was thus only slightly ameliorated. Young John Kinzie, then a lad ten years of age, recalled that while his father's family were living in their own house at Detroit during that winter, themselves practically prisoners of war, he saw the miserable captives suffering from exposure in the severe cold weather without adequate shelter, and

OLD FORT DEARBORN

but little could be done for them by their American friends.

The perils surrounding the Kinzie family when they were once more gathered under the family roof were of the most serious character. Here were assembled a company of the survivors after a day of excitement, bloodshed, and distress hardly to be paralleled in the lives of civilized people. Across the river from the Kinzie house could be seen the victorious savages indulging in wild antics, shouting and dancing exultantly, ransacking and plundering the buildings within the fort, and preparing to torture some of the prisoners to death. They had arrayed themselves in women's hats, shawls, and ribbons, and filled the air with their savage outcries.

Notwithstanding the fact that the house and its inmates were closely guarded by their Indian friends, and that Black Partridge and other friendly Indians had established themselves in the porch of the building as sentinels, to protect the family from any evil that the young men of the tribes might endeavor to commit, their peril was extreme. Everything

THE STORY OF

remained tranquil, however, during the day, and the following night was passed in comparative freedom from alarms.

The next day the Indians set fire to the fort and the entire place was consumed. A party of Indians from the Wabash arrived at this time, having heard of the intended evacuation of the fort, and eager to share in the plunder. They were disappointed and enraged on finding that their arrival was too late, that the spoils had been divided, and the scalps all taken. These Indians had no particular regard for the Kinzies, and it at once became evident that their presence boded destruction to the devoted inmates of the house. They blackened their faces and proceeded to the Kinzie house as the most promising spot to carry out their plundering and bloodthirsty designs.

Black Partridge was especially anxious in behalf of Mrs. Helm, whose safety he wished to assure. By his directions she disguised herself and took refuge in the house of Ouilmette. Ouilmette, being a Frenchman, and living with an Indian wife, was never molested

OLD FORT DEARBORN

by the Indians at any time, being regarded as one of themselves.

The Indians approached this house first and entered without ceremony. Mrs. Bisson, sister of Ouilmette's wife, hastily concealed Mrs. Helm by covering her with a feather bed. She then took her seat in front of the bed and occupied herself with her sewing. The Indians looked into every part of the room, but did not raise the feather mattress under which Mrs. Helm was lying, half smothered. Mrs. Bisson was in terror for her own safety, but bravely maintained an air of indifference during this trying ordeal, and presently the Indians left the house.

They then went over to the Kinzie dwelling, entered the principal room, and seated themselves on the floor in ominous silence. Black Partridge then spoke in a low voice to Waubensee, who was with him as one of the guards, and said: "We have endeavored to save our friends, but it is in vain—nothing will save them now."

At that moment a friendly whoop, loud and clear, was heard from the bank of the river

THE STORY OF

opposite to the house, and Black Partridge instantly arose and ran toward the landing, calling out, "Who are you?" "I am the Sauganash," came the reply. Black Partridge replied, "Then make all speed to the house; your friend is in danger, and you alone can save him."

Sauganash, also known as Billy Caldwell, was a half-breed and was a chief of the Potawatami tribe, and a man of great influence among the Indians. He was not present at the evacuation and massacre of the day before, but had come in time to save the lives of many of the prisoners. With him had come the chief Shabbona, who also used his influence in moderating the brutality of the younger members of the tribes.

The Sauganash hastened across the river, while the threatening savages waited in wonder for his appearance. He calmly entered the room, stood his rifle behind the door, and gazed about him at the silent savages squatting on the floor. He boldly asked them why they had blackened their faces. "Is it that you are mourning for the friends you have

OLD FORT DEARBORN

lost in battle?"—thus purposely misunderstanding their evil designs, which he easily penetrated. "Or is it," he continued, "that you are fasting? If so, ask our friend here, and he will give you to eat. He is the Indians' friend, and never yet refused them what they had need of."

The savages were taken by surprise at this speech, and none among them had the courage to say what the purpose was in their minds. One of them answered that they had come to ask for some white cotton cloth in which they might wrap the bodies of their dead friends before placing them in their graves. As soon as this was said they were provided with a quantity of cloth, and to the relief of everyone they took their departure peaceably.

Quartermaster Sergeant William Griffith escaped the general massacre by a series of remarkable strokes of good fortune. While the troops were leaving the fort it was discovered that the horses carrying the surgeon's apparatus and medicines had strayed off. Griffith went to search for them and bring them up, but being unsuccessful, he

THE STORY OF

hastened to join the column on foot. Before he had proceeded very far he was met and made a prisoner by the chief Topenebe, who was friendly to the whites. The chief took him to the river and put him in a canoe, paddled it across the river and told him to hide himself in the thick woods on the north side.

The next day he cautiously appeared in the vicinity of Ouilmette's house, and the place seeming to be quiet, he entered the cabin at the rear. This was just after the Wabash Indians had left the house for that of Mr. Kinzie.

The family were greatly alarmed at his appearance, and he was at once stripped of his army uniform; he was arrayed in a suit of deerskin, with belt, moccasins, and pipe, like a French engagé. His dark complexion and black whiskers favored the disguise, and all were instructed to address him in French, although he was ignorant of the language. In this character he joined the Kinzie family and with them eventually reached a place of safety.

After the surrender Captain Heald was

OLD FORT DEARBORN

kept unmolested, quite fortunately being given into the custody of an Indian from the Kankakee, who, it seems, had known him previously, and who had formed an attachment for him. The Indian at once made plans for his escape, and soon Captain Heald was placed in a canoe and taken to St. Joseph. Here he was joined by Mrs. Heald, and they both pursued their journey up the east coast of Lake Michigan to Mackinac, where Captain Heald delivered himself up as a prisoner of war to the British commandant, by whom he was well treated and released on parole. Later in the season he found means to reach Louisville, where Mrs. Heald's father, Colonel Samuel Wells, resided. It had been supposed that both Heald and his wife had perished in the massacre, and their appearance was as if they had awakened from the dead.

In due course of time Heald was exchanged, and again entered the service with the rank of Major. He never got rid of the effects of his wound, and in 1817 he resigned his commission in the army and removed with his

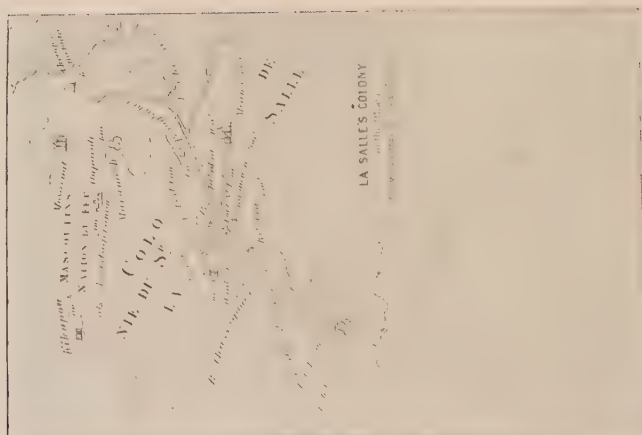
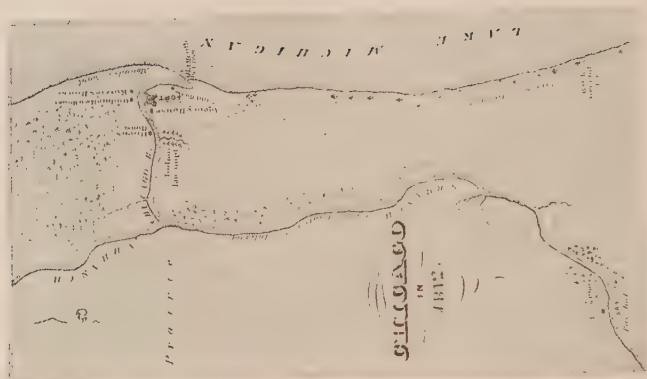
THE STORY OF

family to a small town in Missouri, where he died a few years later.

Lieutenant Helm, who was among the wounded at the time of the surrender, had the good fortune to fall into the hands of some friendly Indians, and was taken to Peoria. He was liberated through the intervention of Thomas Forsyth, the half-brother of Mr. Kinzie, who was the Indian agent at that place. Forsyth had great influence with the Potawatamis. "He had been raised with this nation," says Reynolds, "spoke their language well, and was well acquainted with their character." He advanced the amount demanded by the Indians for Helm's ransom, and had him sent to St. Louis in safety. In this important and dangerous service Forsyth risked his life every moment he was engaged in it, for the Indians at that time were in a highly inflamed condition.

Eventually Lieutenant Helm rejoined his wife at Detroit.

The final scene in the story of old Fort Dearborn was the departure of the Kinzie family and their retinue of servants on the



OLD FORT DEARBORN

third day after the battle and massacre. The fort and the agency house had been destroyed by fire on the second day, and there were now remaining only the Kinzie house, the Ouilmette cabin near it, the house lately occupied by John Burns and his wife and child on the north bank of the main river, and that lately occupied by Charles Lee and his family near the mouth of the river.

On the eighteenth the family of Mr. Kinzie, together with the servants and clerks in his trading establishment, were placed on board of a boat of sufficient capacity to accommodate them all, and they thus took their departure from the scene of so many calamities. There were left in the vicinity only Ouilmette and his family, who were the sole inhabitants of Chicago until the arrival, some time later, of a French trader named Du Pin, who took possession of the unoccupied Kinzie house and lived in it. The length of his stay is not recorded.

The Indians now began to realize the folly of breaking up a station which to them was an abundant source of supplies, where they

THE STORY OF

could come and obtain ammunition, provisions and clothing in exchange for their furs. They would henceforth be obliged to depend upon the small resources of the St. Joseph trading post or travel to Detroit.

All this had been foreseen by the older and wiser men among them, but the hot-blooded young men of the tribes were intent on plunder and the ghastly trophies represented by the scalps of their victims, and they could not be restrained. There was now little inducement to visit the post at Chicago; consequently the great numbers that formerly assembled in the neighborhood scattered to remote places and eked out a precarious existence by fishing and hunting.

The Indians also found that the friendship of the British was a poor dependence as compared with that of the Americans, who were the only governmental authority with whom they could make treaties, and through whom they could obtain recognition and satisfaction for their claims of territorial ownership.

The following episode has been relegated to this late portion of the narrative, as belong-

OLD FORT DEARBORN

ing more to the echoes of the battle on the lake shore than to the battle itself.

Mrs. Lee was one of the women taken by the Indians when her husband and son had been killed at the massacre, as already narrated. She had with her a daughter twelve years old and an infant. These were claimed by our old friend Black Partridge under the following circumstances: The daughter had been placed on horseback for the march and tied fast for fear she would slip off the saddle. When the action was at its height she was severely wounded by a musket ball; and the horse, becoming frightened, set off at a gallop. The girl was partly thrown off, but was held fast by the bands, and hung dangling until she was met by Black Partridge, who caught the horse and disengaged her from the saddle. The chief had known the family and was greatly attached to this little girl, whom he recognized at once.

On finding that she was so seriously wounded that she could not recover, and that, besides, she was suffering great agony, he put the finishing stroke to her at once

THE STORY OF

with his tomahawk. He said afterwards that this was one of the hardest things he ever attempted to do, but that he did it because he could not bear to see her suffer.

(Black Partridge) then took the mother and her infant to his village on the Au Sable, where he became warmly attached to the former; "so much so," relates the author of *Wau-Bun*, "that he wished to marry her; but as she very naturally objected, he treated her with the greatest respect and consideration." He was not disposed to liberate her from captivity, however, hoping that in time he could prevail upon her to become his wife.

During the following winter the child became ill, and was not restored by ordinary cures. Black Partridge then offered to take the child to Chicago, where the French trader named Du Pin, who had arrived after the massacre, was then living in the Kinzie house, and obtain medical aid from him. Accordingly the child was warmly wrapped, and the chief carried his precious charge all the way in his arms.

Arriving at the residence of M. du Pin, he

OLD FORT DEARBORN

carefully placed the child on the floor. "What have you there?" asked the trader. "A young raccoon, which I have brought you as a present," replied the chief. Then opening the pack, he displayed the little sick child. M. du Pin furnished some remedies for its complaint and when Black Partridge was about to return he told the trader of his proposal to Mrs. Lee to become his wife, and of the way it had been received.

M. du Pin, being a man of discernment, "entertained some fears," continues the *Wau-Bun* account, "that the chief's honorable resolution might not hold out, to leave it to the lady herself whether to accept his addresses or not, so he entered at once into a negotiation for her ransom, and so effectually wrought upon the good feelings of Black Partridge that he consented to bring his fair prisoner at once to Chicago, that she might be restored to her friends."

Mrs. Lee accordingly was brought to Chicago and had an opportunity of expressing her gratitude to the French trader who had, without having seen her or known her, ren-

THE STORY OF

dered so important a service as paying a ransom for her return to civilization. In course of time this M. du Pin, who it seems was a man without a family when he came, proposed to Mrs. Lee himself, and, more fortunate than the dusky chieftain, he was accepted. "We only know," says the *Wau-Bun* account, "that in process of time Mrs. Lee became Madame du Pin, and that they lived together in great happiness for many years after."

It is a relief, after narrating the events connected with the evacuation of Fort Dearborn and the massacre which followed it, to invite the reader's attention to this picture, as a contrast with the havoc and dismay of that dreadful day in August, 1812, when Chicago was left with but one white inhabitant, and he a renegade.

At St. Joseph the Kinzie family remained under the protection of Chief Topenebe and his band until the following November. They were then conducted to Detroit under the escort of trusty Indian friends, and delivered up as prisoners of war to the British. Soon after John Kinzie was paroled, though after-

OLD FORT DEARBORN

wards again taken into custody. At the end of the war he was finally released, and in 1816 he again became a resident of Chicago, when the second Fort Dearborn was built and occupied by a garrison of United States troops.

After the destruction of Fort Dearborn, Chicago ceased for a time to be a fit dwelling-place for white men and their families. It continued in this condition with but little change for the following four years, and then the troops came back. Meanwhile peace had been concluded between the two warring nations, treaties of peace and friendship had been made with various tribes of Indians, and a new era began.

During the winter succeeding the battle and massacre the only two residents of Chicago who were householders were Ouilmette and Du Pin. A pretty fair estimate may be made of the total population of the place, including the half-breed children of Ouilmette and the *engagés* and helpers in the employ of Du Pin. It is safe to say that the total number was not more than ten or twelve persons.

Bloody retribution overtook at least one of

THE STORY OF

those among the savages who on the day of the massacre showed no mercy to his victims. This was a chief known as a deadly enemy of the whites and who bore the expressive name of Shavehead, because of his peculiar manner of tying up his scanty hair. Years afterwards Chief Shavehead was in company with a band of hunters in the Michigan woods; in the party was a white man who had formerly been a soldier at Fort Dearborn, and was one of the survivors of the battle on the lake shore. At one of the camp-fires the chief, being of a boastful disposition, related, while under the influence of liquor, to those sitting about the camp-fire, the frightful tale concerning the events of that day, dwelling upon its horrors and boasting of his own deeds. He was not aware that one of the whites whom he had so fiercely assailed was at that moment listening to his braggart utterances. The old soldier, as he heard the tale, was maddened by the recall of the well-remembered scenes.

Toward nightfall the old savage departed alone in the direction of the forest. Silently

OLD FORT DEARBORN

the soldier with loaded rifle followed upon his steps. Others observed them as they passed out of sight into the shades of the forest. The soldier returned after a time to his companions, but Shavehead was never again seen. "He had paid the penalty of the crime," says Mason, "to one who could with some fitness exact it."

The War of 1812, between the United States and Great Britain, was actually begun some time before the date of the declaration of war issued by the United States, on June 12, 1812; and it was continued some time after the treaty of peace had been signed, December 24, 1814. Of this war, the Fort Dearborn massacre on August 15, 1812, was one of the disastrous events.

"The lives of thirty thousand Americans," says Larned, "were sacrificed during this war of two and a half years, and the national debt was increased one hundred millions of dollars."

Nine years cover the period of existence of Old Fort Dearborn. In that nine years of history it witnessed the efforts of three

THE STORY OF

nations to subdue a continent, and played its part in the struggles between those nations. Established as a frontier post, it became an important link in the chain of western defenses, and one of those schools of military instruction in which lessons were learned by those who had the task of preserving by force of arms a young republic in the midst of powerful and unscrupulous foes. A rallying point for traders and settlers in the virgin fields of the west, it was representative of a phase of development of the great Northwest Territory, and indeed of the development of the United States. Its culminating disaster, which left it a heap of ruins, was one of those temporary setbacks which do not for long hold back the progress of such a growing nation. Within four years after the accident of war had made the fort and those in and about it the victims of a lingering barbarism, the foothold of the nation was secure in the west, the beginnings of its agricultural and commercial prosperity were laid, and upon the ruins of the old fort rose the walls of a new Fort Dearborn.

THE END.



arc

Books-Non Fiction

4 54013 00000 5

205-170510

6675

544-BAC-098

